

## NURTURING OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

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Today, many people are asking about the spiritual life and how to nurture it. We are all on a spiritual journey and to be healthy and whole we need to recognize that fact. Our spiritual life is not a separate department of our lives. It is the whole of life. Spirit is our life's principle. It is the very breath that we breathe. Body, mind and spirit are all inter-connected, all one. Our spirit is connected to the source of all life - the Divine. One of the words used to describe God was "Ruah" - meaning the breath of God, the Spirit of God. Eastern mysticism and meditation emphasize deep breathing and an awareness of our breathing. We cannot get along without breathing. Don't try it. It won't work. When we meditate, we get in touch with God's healing power always readily available to us. Every step we take, we leave footprints of peace or worry, joy or sadness, anxiety or freedom. Meditation or getting in touch with the Divine within can help us let go of our anxieties and allow the free flow of Divine energy within.

How do we tend to our spiritual life? It is not something we do after work hours or after retirement. It is the very fabric of our day to day living in the midst of the pains and joys, the muddles and mysteries of every day. By paying attention and listening carefully, we get in touch with the hunger of the human spirit seeking a deeper connection to the Divine life within. It may express itself in the form of discomfort or dissatisfaction with what is, a longing for a deep inner peace, a search for "something more" than we now experience. It calls us to look critically at our daily lives and ask: "Where and how is the Divine already present in our lives? What is it that blocks the flow of life within us and among us? Is the search for power, wealth and success the driving force in both private and public life?" In a world that is held together by technology, science and development, often in their extreme, it can lead to spiritual amnesia and bankruptcy of spirit, leaving people running on gas fumes. It does not mean that technology, a sound and sustainable economy and good jobs are not essential to our community's wellbeing and to the common good. We need to keep the larger picture in mind - the reign of God, the plan of God, for all people. The good news is that we can change our minds and our paths and choose new directions that are life-giving.

What can we do to strengthen the spiritual aspect of our lives?

- Start with the belief that the Divine pervades every aspect of our lives. Take time to listen, to hear the longing inside ourselves and center our thoughts on God.
- Spiritual life does not remove us from the pains and challenges of our daily living. In the midst of all that, we can get in touch with the Divine wisdom and strength - the Divine Presence that never lets us walk alone.
- As we get caught in a frenzy of activities and demands, of false expectations and needs, we can start sorting out and prioritizing our needs and issues and our fragmented lives will become more whole and satisfying. We can redefine what constitutes success and happiness and connect with what brings true happiness to our lives. We can also celebrate and respect the divine life in all of nature and work to preserve it.

- Allow the life of God to consciously flow through us and we will grow stronger. We will create a welcoming space where God can live within our very being.
- Spirituality is not just for ourselves alone. It connects us with the Divine in other people and in the communities where we live out our daily lives. It calls us to be especially concerned about the poor and abandoned of our day and work to bring peace and dignity to all.
- The increase in violence in our homes, our schools, neighborhood and nation is an indication that the edifice we have built is crumbling and we need a new foundation. Vaclav Havel once said: “Transcendence, the recognition of a Divine power, is the only real alternative to extinction.”
- This will call us to seek out and discover what is God's agenda for ourselves and our world and work to make it a reality. It means conveying that vision to people in power and urging them to create systems and structures that enhance rather than dehumanize life, to replace war that is obsolete with peace, and to provide the basic necessities for all people. Bishop Oscar Romero reminds us we are “to be the microphone and messengers of God in the face of injustice in our day.”

Author William H. Shannon reminds us that in discovering the Divine and nurturing our spiritual life we arrive at the awareness of who we really are. When we live only on the surface of our lives, we are living out of an illusion that veils our true self, the self that we are in God. What we value, what is worth striving for and how compassionate we are will enrich all the generations that follow us. A good question to ask is “What legacy do I wish to leave to future generations?”

I believe we are living in a privileged moment – a time of breakthrough as well as breakdown – a moment of great possibility and unbounded hope. Why do I feel this way? I believe that the Spirit of God is alive and well, operating within my life and your life and within our local and global community and inviting us to make secure connections that will last a lifetime and beyond. With that kind of foundation, we can look to the future with hope. The fact is the Divine is already here. How we discover, name, recognize and call forth that dimension of our lives is the challenge.

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