

## Living the Spirit Of Many Things

As we enter into a New Year, I find myself wondering just what this effort of mine in writing these inserts to our bulletin amounts to. For one thing I realize that there is an abundance of good writings to be found in published books. I do not dare to mention the value of more technological sources for helping us to live a Christ-like life. One can even find a message of Pope Francis on Twitter. At the same time I cannot help knowing what so many of the messages on my Christmas cards tell me – that the sender finds these inserts valuable.

I rely on the Holy Spirit to quietly and in an ordinary way inspire me as to what to write. So here goes this insert. I found myself looking over the catalogue for Ignatius Press. In this source there is found the typical advertisement for many of its books. I found the one for Bishop Sheen's book on "Remade for Happiness" particularly interesting.

Here it is: "When asked, "What is wrong with the world?", G.K. Chesterton famously replied simply, "I am." People who reflect on life's problems [Who doesn't?] find many of them to be of their own making. We want to be happy and yet we often seem to be the source of our own unhappiness – as well as that of others. Even when that is not the case, our lives, as blessed as they may be [ours surely are], have their share of disappointments, shocks, and disillusionments. How do we respond? Do we become cynical and try at all costs to get as much pleasure as we can? Or do we recognize we were made for more? "

"A genuine spiritual life, Sheen contends, consists in more than obeying a set of commands, submitting to certain laws, reading the Bible, or even following the example of Jesus. Before all else it consists in being re-created and incorporated into a new life of grace – and brought into a new kind of life – the supernatural life of grace – and brought into a new kind of relationship – as a child of God through Jesus Christ."

My first reaction to thinking about what was written there was to agree that there are indeed many problems that face our world today. Some of them touch on our moral life and the life of our countrymen and women. How do we face the continuing murder of the innocents, the desperate situation of so many poor, etc? I know that much is written about how to react to such wider problems in our world. I know I cannot write here and now about them. I can, however, share my own reaction to this article.

First of all, we should admit that we really are about seeking happiness. We simply are made that way. To this I recall the familiar catechism answer to why God made us. The ultimate reason was to be happy with him forever. What we need to realize is that we also are made to find spiritual happiness along the way of our journey from God to God. We are to face our personal problems [problems that affect our living] in a personal way. That includes our spiritual problems.

Bishop Sheen tells us the secret here is to be *spiritually* remade. This is a theme I can address from my own experience. Let me try to write about it.

To be spiritually remade, I believe, we need to live in and with and by the Spirit. We need to be aware of God's presence in our life. We need to have that awareness as being a presence that is not just found in extraordinary ways, but in our ordinary life. Can the mother's activities in seeing the children off with a good breakfast be a spiritual sign of God's presence? I believe it is. Do you? Think, then, of many ordinary parts of your day – as I must think of mine — and find in them a moment of awareness of that wonderful presence.

When the article summarizes Bishop Sheen in saying what alone is not enough to describe the spiritual life, we must understand that the things mentioned are still very valuable. What things? To have a spiritual life consistent with Christian vocation means to obey the commands of God. It means for us Catholics to accept and live the teachings of the Church. We surely should find time to read the Bible, or at least to pay attention to the readings at Mass each week.

Yet, the good Bishop tells us that a genuine spiritual life needs more. To me it is enough to think of grace. We need to have supernatural grace. I always recall that the best definition of that grace is found in the Scripture verse that tells us that it is a sharing in the divine nature. I find much more than one verse to describe this grace, this great gift of God. There is the whole teaching of St. Paul who describes the teaching of the Mystical Body of Christ. You must not forget that Jesus has made us by our election members of His own Body. We are His hands, His heart, His presence in the world. Indeed, when taken together, His Mystical Body is the Church. So we can say that *we* are the Church,

Grace comes as a gift of God, who shares His life so generously with us. How?, you ask. I would respond, first of all, by all the Sacraments, which give grace. Baptism gives us the beginning of living spiritually or supernaturally, along with our very material or physical life. Confirmation makes us active disciples and even soldiers in the battle against evil. But above all, the Holy Eucharist gives us grace, even the Author of grace.

Living the Spirit means so many things. It means making the sacraments a vital part of our life. It means also those other things mentioned, keeping the commandments, being doers of the Word. So we try to put into action the precepts of the Church. To do these we need grace. Here grace is called by theologians, actual grace. It is this active working of God's power through us that makes us able to respond to our desire to do works of love in our everyday life.

I could not end this theme without mentioning that a genuine spiritual life is a life of love. It is all that really pure and selfless love means. It is a life of not just giving love but also of receiving it. God may make His love available to us, but we must desire it. We must ask for it when we face all those problems that make up our personal life. And we must ask that His love somehow be given as an answer to those wider problems our world faces. Love is not just a part of the spiritual life. God is Love and He is Life.

*God love and bless you always!  
Monsignor David Morrison*