

Living the Spirit Spiritual Life

Many theologians take time to add a special dimension to their studies and research. It is to add to the teachings of the Church the dimension of spirituality. It is not enough to learn and even understand the teachings of the Church and the revelations from Scripture. There is a necessity for us to love them and live them in a practical way.

In this insert I will dwell upon my own thoughts and hope that they will find value in the readers' journey from God to God. I have thought it important not to relegate my spiritual life only to the extraordinary in my life. At the same time I must not forget that in my life there has been the extraordinary. It begins with the grace of Baptism, which seems like an ordinary gift from God to His faithful. Yet Baptism is an amazing sacrament, giving grace throughout one's life. To me it is the extraordinary grace of the ordinary.

What is the ordinary? It is simply our daily living. Much of it has only a slender attachment to what we call our spiritual life. There are all those simple ways of everyday life. How much time we give to them. How much energy we expend in our daily schedule. Yet because there really is no activity that does not have some moral value in God's eyes, we must not relegate it to the valueless waste of time or grace.

Our spiritual life follows the usual pattern of what makes up our life. I recall that one author saw life as a number of "passages." We pass from infancy to childhood. We go through the days of adolescence. We become mature and find ourselves with the most of our lifetime powers. Then we begin to age, and little by little we find ourselves diminished of their effectiveness.

In every stage of life we must make some effort to live with a relation to the spiritual. I think today of one of the last children that I baptized. He is about to receive his First Holy Communion. How do I react? I think first of the passage of time, his and mine. As a priest I feel great joy that he is so fortunate to have had good parents and has already learned the most important dimension of the spiritual life for a Catholic. If you have forgotten what that is let me remind you.

The central knowledge for us must be an awareness and understanding of the presence of the Lord in our life. He comes to us as the Triune God. At times we know the intimate love of the Father. We find ourselves knowing the Son as being one with us in both the ordinary and extraordinary of our life. And need I tell you that we also have the Holy Spirit.

In this last presence we must not think only of how the Spirit of God is with us in charismatic ways. He is the very means of how grace infuses our actions. Our living the Spirit is living what people would call a good moral life. How could we keep the commandments if we had not been given His gifts in abundance? How fortunate are those who have received them by the powerful sacrament of Confirmation.

I would be remiss in this consideration if I did not mention that our spiritual life is very much dependent on our choice of vocation. Too many Catholics limit the idea of being called, having a vocation to the call to being a priest, deacon or religious in consecrated life. No, the most basic call for those who follow Christ is in marriage. It is the source of the fecundity of the Church, bring ever new souls (and bodies) to the Church.

As I write this I am saddened that civil circumstances have brought us to the point of a desire to redefine marriage. At the same time marriage as a holy way of life will not end for those who believe. This new paganism will bring about its usual historic results. One thinks how the breakdown of a moral dimension to life in ancient civilizations was a destructive force. [Pray for our country and the world!]

It is not my purpose in this writing to write about so many of the current concerns that Christians must have these days. I do think of the terrible attacks on Christianity and the renewed persecutions, especially in the Middle East. I also see the breakdown of Christian conduct closer to home. You are as qualified as I to consider these evident concerns.

My thoughts turn here to being a bit personal. I see two aspects of my present “passage.” One is the simple fact of retirement. The other is how I must live my vocation in this last passage of life. I invite you to consider where you are in your own life. If I share my thoughts here, it is to note that we all have to reckon with the meaning of life itself.

I have found that retirement must be seen and accepted in the context of so much else. There are the practical arrangements that are a part of life, such as where to live and with whom. There is a concern for one’s health – I hope without becoming overly concentrated on this aspect. There is facing the effects of one’s retirement on others. For myself, I see that somehow I must accept that life has changed and find in it some value. Who would want to live in a valueless existence?

For a priest it is easy to know what that value is. You see, a priest is forever. He has the joy of having who he is be the same as what he does. I really have not had the trauma of losing my job. What changes for the priest is finding a continued way of ministry, being a priest. When it comes to the last possibility it is to find value in one’s prayer life. I must add that for some it means as well the acceptance of suffering and making that suffering a value for one’s spiritual life and the good of others.

I have written this and shared this with you that you will try to make time to meditate on who you really are – a child of God – and what you must do with the time given you. You will have to find your own way, for there are so many paths on our journey of life. But it is my earnest prayer that you will live with a joyful recognition that life is, as I have said often, your journey from God. No doubt about that! And it a journey to God, where there will be a meeting with Love, for God is Love!

4-29-15

God love you always!
Monsignor David Morrison