

Living the Spirit
Conversation Four

I have decided that this will be the last of my more informal inserts. I hope that from my different themes you have found some small inspiration for your spiritual growth.

Writing about my travels [which managed to have aspects of pilgrimages] was meant to help you understand that even ordinary life can be made a source of spiritual grace. When we go on vacation, we may find an opportunity to take time to foster our better selves. Perhaps we learn to appreciate God's gifts in our natural world. We may realize how many good people there are who accompany us as we journey through life. We may even learn to appreciate what we have at home. Visits to places that we call our shrines certainly offer graces if we are open to receiving them.

I must tell you that I did not go to Lourdes or other shrines with the purpose to obtain any physical cure. I cannot recall all my purposes. Curiosity was a part of the desire to see what happens there. I can only tell you that I always left from them with some grace. One can only be thankful to the Lord that we are not as afflicted as others are in our personal aches and pains.

You need not go to any special holy place to find the grace you need. The Lord is present all around us, and especially in the tabernacles of our chapels and churches. I have always felt that the Holy Spirit at all times is at work and knows where to find us. Perhaps it is time to suggest that you make your own pilgrimage to the place where you will know the presence of the Lord.

Maybe you will find a way to visit our Cathedral in this Year of Mercy. Walking through the Holy Door, you will become the receiver of the special indulgence offered by the Church for those who seek it. Be mindful that you must fulfill the conditions for the indulgence. Confession, Communion and the offering of prayers for the Holy Father's intentions are required. [I saw on the internet that the Shrine of the Miraculous Medal is one of Philadelphia's designated places for this indulgence. The Diocesan visit to the National Shrine in Washington is also worth considering.]

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With some trepidation I now turn to another theme on my mind. These days we are being deluged with the onslaughts of the political campaigns. We cannot be indifferent to what we may learn from them. Voting is a moral obligation for us as good citizens of our democracy. Many do not see the nature of the obligation to vote as having any moral obligation. Our world is a troubled one, and we must see that in some small way we have responsibility to do what we can to bring good values to its everyday existence.

It is not the desire of the Church to enter into the political world. Yet, it does have to teach lessons of morality to its members, and where possible, to the whole world. Catholics, I have read in the *Catholic Register*, are a 50/50 group when it comes to the partisan side of politics. Sadly many Catholics see no spiritual side to their vote. They become complicit in some way with some of the evils that afflict our society.

A letter to the *Catholic Register* noted that there is no “Catholic vote.” Past elections show that 50% of Catholics voted for a pro-abortion candidate. The author of the letter adds: “this amounts to formal cooperation with an intrinsic evil.” It proves that voting is not a simple exercise for any of us. The author of the letter wrote of his belief that Catholics have in the past been irrelevant. Should we still be so?

There are many things for us to ponder as we face this period of three long months of political activity invading our otherwise calm and agreeable lives. We may face the problem of what to do when there really is no good choice possible or when all candidates are opposed to our principles. For myself, I know I must choose the lesser evil. I find it necessary to pray for guidance as a way to find what I must do. That is my recommendation for you.

Please know that I write here of my own personal concern. In this matter I do not speak in a formal way for the Church. As you know the Church tries to maintain a distance from matters that belong to civil authority. I must let you have your own concerns. But I do want you to do your best to allow your faith to invade your life in all its aspects. As believers in Gospel values we must live them in our life as citizens of our beloved country.

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As I end these four conversations in print I want to speak about myself. I have now lived for 87 years, 62 of them as a priest. I find myself feeling at times the usual burdens of age. Don't we all? Yet in my thoughts of my life here among you I enjoy so many happy memories. I find myself amazed that the children I came to know about in my first years here are thoroughly grown up. After all I am here for 25 years or so. When I hear of their faithfulness to their Church I can only rejoice and thank God.

I also think of those not with me here, who have gone ahead to a place so much better than here. Yes, there is such a place. Faith tells us so. Meanwhile, as I end these four somewhat different inserts, I say to each of you: thanks! Do share with me the duty to be thankful to God for the many ways this parish has lifted us up. Thank God for its priests, especially its pastor who so dedicates himself to our benefit. Appreciate our staff and all our many members who serve us. Try to be that kind of servant in our parish, if the only service you can give is to smile at one another.

God love and bless you!
Monsignor Morrison

**May the Divine assistance remain with us always,
and may the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.**

Lord, have mercy! Christ, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!