

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time (10/02/16)

Live your spirituality in your daily life

At some point in time, most people experience a feeling that there is something greater than the concrete world we inhabit. Whether this feeling is inspired by a mystery of science, the awe-inspiring view from a majestic mountaintop, or the energy experienced in connecting with others, these moments can be both humbling and grounding. It's these feelings, moments and experiences which form the foundation of our notion of spirituality.

One of the most beautiful aspects of spirituality is that it can be experienced differently by everyone. For some people, spirituality is about a devotion to a religious faith. Others seek out a more personal connection with their spiritual side by engaging in activities such as yoga, meditation, spending time in nature or creative expression.

Many people have the misconception that spiritual life or religious life is somewhere up there in the sky—an ethereal or mystical reality—and that our everyday life is too mundane and not so nice. Often people think that to be a spiritual person, we must ignore or neglect our everyday life, and go into another, special realm. Actually, I think being a spiritual person means becoming a real human being. St Francis wrote, in his classical, *An Introduction to the Devout Life*: “It is not merely an error but a heresy to suppose that a devout life (holiness) is necessarily banished from the soldier’s camp, the merchant’s shop, the prince’s court, or the domestic hearth” (Chap. III). Therefore “It is not so important whether you walk on water or walk in space. The true miracle is to walk on earth.” It’s true. In other words, becoming a kind human being is probably the greatest miracle we can perform.

How can I live the spirituality of daily life?

The gospel text of today begins with the request of the apostles to Jesus: “Increase our faith.” And Jesus replies, “If you had faith like a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea’, and it would obey you” (Lk 17:5-6). Often people quote these lines implying that if you had enough faith you could perform a show of miracles. This could well be the case. But...., Once a child asked the Guru, "Can you bend spoons with your mind?" Another asked, "Has God ever talked to you?" They were very disappointed when I said, "No." he went on

to explain that for him a real true miracle is becoming a kind human being. If you have psychic/spiritual powers but lack a kind heart, the powers are of no use. In fact, they could even be disadvantageous: people may get very upset if they find all their spoons have been bent!

However, in the lines that follow (Lk 17:7-10) Jesus seems to imply something else. He talks about the fulfilment of duties. So, is Jesus saying, if we had faith like a mustard seed our ordinary activities of daily life could become extraordinary? I tend to think so.

So then, here we have the first clue on how we can move towards holiness: add a little bit of faith to the fulfilment of our daily duties. When we add faith to my daily work, we begin to participate in the creative and redemptive work of God. I strongly believe that my sermon in itself may not touch anyone, but the personal sacrifice of time and effort that I had to put-in in preparing this homily, when offered to God an oblation, becomes redemptive for all of us. A parent's words may not directly save a child, but it is the sacrifice that the parent makes in faith, in working for the child, that could contribute to the wellbeing of the child in the sight of God.

Now, how do I add faith to my daily tasks? Simple: by raising my mind and heart to God. In this process I am personally inspired by two figures – one, an Italian fictional character, and the other, a French priest who lived in the 20th Century. I am not too sure if you have read the series of books or watched the movie: *Don Camillo* (movie, acted by Terence Hill). This parish priest has an interesting habit as he goes about his daily adventures. He spontaneously talks to Jesus on the crucifix that hangs on the wall of the sacristy. And often Jesus does answer him! In one such conversation about 'public opinion', Don Camillo tells Jesus: But public opinion has some value!!! And Jesus replies: I know that, Don Camillo, public opinion has nailed me to the cross!!!

The French priest Michel Quoist (1921-1997) is more contemporary. His book *Prayers of Life* is a collection of prayers spontaneously uttered as he goes about his daily life. I read this book when I was 18, and it made a very deep impression on my spirituality. Just to give you an example: Father Quoist goes to watch a football game on a Friday night. He begins to pray even as he watches the game. He compares the football game to the liturgy of life as "the ball moves from celebrant to celebrant." He realises that in the game of life God is the coach. And he prays that he be a player, rather than a spectator in the game of life.

I would like to conclude this reflection with the words of St Paul to the Corinthians. These words add the most important aspect to the spirituality of daily life: “And though I have the power of prophecy, to penetrate all mysteries and knowledge, and though I have all *the faith necessary to move mountains* – if I am without love, I am nothing” (1Cor 13:2). Yes, love moves mountains in our daily lives. It lightens up our duties.

When we have faith and love in the fulfilment of our daily duties, we can sing like the blind poet John Milton, particularly when we are incapacitated by age or sickness: “They also serve [God] who only stand and wait.”