

SPIRITUALITY OF THE CURSILLO LEADER

Source: National Cursillo Center Mailing – April 2010

Today there is a great hunger and thirst for a more authentic spiritual life, in short, for spirituality. People are interested in living a fuller, deeper, and more personal human lives. As Cursillo leaders, we too seek for a more authentic spiritual life, especially after having lived the experience of Cursillo. But what is meant by spirituality and in particular, Catholic Christian spirituality?

Before delving into Catholic Christian spirituality, the question that begs a response is: Can the Cursillo be considered a form of spirituality? The Structure of Ideas book states that “It (Cursillo) is not a spirituality; it is a method for making possible any spirituality, for making the genuinely spiritual possible.” Cursillo, therefore, gives us the tools to develop our spirituality. Cursillo offers the person what is fundamental to being Christian, a solution to the human longing to seek fulfillment beyond ‘self’. Cursillo is meant to create a hunger for God, to enter into a deeper union with our creator. It is designed to provoke questions, the kind of questions that will send each one of us on our own journey of discovery, to go deeper and deeper into what God is calling us to be, not necessarily to be better Cursillistas but to be better Christians.

The following information is from an article that appeared on the American Catholic website. It provides a good explanation of Catholic Christian spirituality. Christian spirituality stresses that we begin with the gift from above, from the Holy Spirit of God. Christian spirituality could be defined as ‘our life in the Spirit of God’ or ‘the art of letting God's Spirit fill us, work in us, guide us.’ So what does the ‘spirit’ in ‘spirituality’ tell us? The basic meaning of spirit in Scripture is “wind/breath.” In the Old Testament, a few texts refer to the activity of God’s Spirit in creation - Gn 1:2; Ps 33:6; Num 11:17; 1 Sam 16:13. In the New Testament, Jesus is conceived through the power of the Spirit - Mt 1:18, 20; Lk 1:35. His ministry begins and continues in the Spirit - Lk 3:22, 4:1, 4:18. Other New Testament references include: Mt 12:28; Jn 19:30; Jn 14:16-17; and Jn 20:2.

The Christian lives in and through and with the power of the same breath - Spirit as Jesus. “But whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Cor 6:17). The Spirit gives different gifts for the building up of the community in love and is the bond of union holding all together in Christ (1 Cor 12:13). The fruit of the Spirit in our lives is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22-23).

The Holy Spirit makes us holy, calling each of us to be a saint, a holy person. For the Christian, then, *spiritual* refers to the whole of our existence, filled with the Spirit of Christ. The Christian view is that spiritual refers to the whole person, body, and soul, living under the influence of God’s Spirit. We are so filled with this Spirit that Paul can say, “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

Christian spirituality, then, deals with the whole person — body and soul, thoughts and feelings, emotions and passions, hopes, fears, dreams — as we live in and with the power

of the Spirit. And it deals with the whole life of the whole person, calling us to live this life to the fullest. The call and challenge of the spiritual life is not restricted only to some Christians (priests or religious, for example) but is addressed to all. All share the same Spirit and are called to one and the same holiness. This basic fact was stressed by Vatican Council II. Its Decree on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, devotes Chapter five to this theme: *Everyone shares one call to holiness in the Spirit.*

There are a wide variety of spiritualities within the Catholic Church, each with its own approach and uniqueness, but with a common goal; the quest of the human spirit for something that is above us, that is bigger, deeper, “more than” the ordinary, surface reality of life. The spiritualities include, but are not limited to, Benedictine, Franciscan, Ignatian, and so on.

How can this be if there is only one Christian spirituality? The answer lies in the broad diversity of human experience. No one lives Christian spirituality in the abstract. We all live at specific and particular moments of space and time. All of us belong to particular religious communities into which we are born, in which we grow, are educated, come to know and experience God. These circumstances shape our response to the Spirit’s call. Differing times and places pose new challenges, new questions. They call forth different models of life seeking to respond to those questions and challenges. In short, the concrete and changing circumstances of our lives cannot but affect the way we live out our Christian spirituality. These Christian spiritualities are but different responses to the one common Christian call to holiness.

St. Benedict and St. Scholastica, St. Francis and St. Clare, St. Dominic, St. Angela Merici, St. Ignatius Loyola did not set out to found new schools of spirituality. They wanted simply to live the gospel life, to follow Christ fully and seriously to the best of their ability and in response to the needs of their times. Their example inspired others down through the ages to follow Christ as they did. Their followers pass on to us Benedictine, Franciscan, Dominican, Ursuline, Ignatian styles, or “schools” of spirituality.

When a child latches on to a new idea, he or she can quickly assume that everyone else’s ideas are now wrong. The same danger exists in Christian spirituality. “Our” spirituality all too quickly can begin to look like the only spirituality. We cannot lose sight of the fact that whatever style we may feel most at home in, it is only a secondary modification of the one Christian spirituality.

The rosary is fine, one might argue, but centering prayer is really superior. Or another Catholic might accept the presence of a spirituality centered on small prayer groups meeting weekly, but feel that praying individual novenas is a superior path to God. Here the danger is of spiritual chauvinism. The Christian is not called to spiritual isolationism. Whatever the particular style, all are gifts of the one Spirit. The word catholic means, after all, “embracing the whole, the totality.” Any truly catholic view will recognize that no one form captures all of the Christian life. Diversity manifests the richness of the Christian life.

That catholic worldview involves even one further dimension. Each one of us is an individual and unique person and represents a unique embodiment of Christian spirituality. There has never been before, nor will there ever be again, a spirituality exactly like mine, exactly like yours. No one else has the experiences, talents, values, hopes and dreams which characterize you or me as individuals. On this level, there are as many different spiritualities as there are persons.

What a wonderful aspect of God's creation! We can say in true humility that each of us gives to God something which God did not have before and would not have if we did not give it. That something is your and my unique embodiment of the risen Christ in this world here and now. This is one of the mysteries of God's gift of freedom. And it carries an awesome responsibility. No one has ever lived my life before. We have to be open to the God who calls us, as Abraham was called, into unknown futures. Jesus calls his disciples, "Come, follow me."

Living a full Christian life takes courage. Every Christian has times of doubt, confusion, uncertainty, and struggle. What lifestyle of holiness am I called to? How can I follow Jesus in a consumer culture? Am I being faithful to my spouse, my children, my family, my community? Am I devoted to peace and to justice, to love? Do I spend enough time in prayer? Am I open to God calling me through my choices and relationships?

Are we willing to assume this much responsibility? That is a question each Christian must answer in his or her heart. Some of us look for priests, pope, "religious" people, even a false reading of the Bible, to whom we can surrender our freedom in return for a security blanket. Yet refusing to take responsibility for our calling is refusing to hear the voice of God calling us to new and fuller life. Personal responsibility means listening to the Spirit in our lives — speaking in our hearts, in our relationships, in our Church — and making life-giving choices. The guidance of parents, priests, and counselors can be very helpful in discerning the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is our most important spiritual director.

The spirit in Christian spirituality is the Holy Spirit, God calling us here and now in our hearts, in our families, in our Church and society. It is the same spirit that calls all of us. But since no two people are the same, our response to God's call will be as unique as each person, each child of God, who has ever lived.