

Theological Reflection

The Faith We Share

One of the primary books we use in our spiritual direction program is The Common Faith, by John Wickham, S.J. Father John calls it a practical book designed for the reader (participant) to learn how “to share their common faith experiences.” By doing so, they deepen “their commitment to the Lord and one another.” This might be summed up by the expression a Christian is a person who has met another Christian. We impact others by what we say, how we live and what we share of our faith in Jesus Christ.

The majority of Christians, including Catholics, is not well informed about their faith and cannot give a reason for why they believe. They have not had opportunities to share their faith or how God has acted in their lives or not acted. The Church’s story of God’s creation, our sin, and our being saved by Jesus has not become their story. They have not reflected or prayed on Scriptural stories in light of their own stories. When those biblical stories become our stories in light of our whole life, we are better prepared to be used in the army of God. We become informed by self-knowledge; we know who we are in Christ Jesus.

Father Wickham had a great conviction in saying “a group of adult believers in Jesus Christ cannot become a Christian community today unless the members gain a heightened awareness of the faith they share.” Such Christians who know themselves can sense when and how the Holy Spirit is moving in them.

Father John’s book and life were concerned with our deeper selves. “A short course in instructions in the Catholic faith...will not be effective in our present circumstances.” He called for an involvement “in the process of learning in ways that change them interiorly – in their deeper selves.” Some of us have been fortunate in being educated by well trained, faith-filled catechists. In many programs at both the parish level and/or diocesan level the opportunity exists to learn to share our faith experiences which melt the hearts of the participants and moves “them at the centre of their lives as Christian.”

What were words and testimony on a page of Father John’s book became a reality in our spiritual direction program. By praying on Scripture daily in our 15 day program, our students changed, grew in their faith and became a

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community. We have witnessed it in every one of our 49 sessions. Only God and his grace can form a group of 40 students into a bonded, loving, supportive community two weeks at a time. The bonding grows stronger over the three sessions of our school as does the healing and our love of God, and each other. And so we echo the words of Father John, “it is wonderful to behold.”

This profound mystery of God leads us on a marvelous quest to know Him. I can only hope that these theological reflections instruct and lift our hearts to God our Father.

We just quoted Father Wickham mentioning “present circumstances” and there is no need to enumerate the woes of this world or the wiles of Satan who holds so many in bondage. As believers, saved by hope, it is our task as we serve Jesus Christ our Ruler and King to share our hope with others in our family and communities. There is a great hunger for God these days. Our churches were filled immediately after the fall of the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001. After a few days the phenomenon evaporated. In these days that bring alive the phrase we pray at the end of our rosary “valley of tears,” we must pray more for peace filled with hope promised by our Lord that he would be with us always. I would suggest reading Pope Benedict’s encyclical “Spe Salve”, “saved by hope.”

Benedict XVI, as have other popes, mentions the anti-Christ who would replace hope in God and the power of prayer with a secular humanism and a false peace. As followers of the Lamb we must do all that we can to carry Christ with us, to join true faith-filled communities that give us strength for the journey. As followers of the Lamb we call on him for true faith for the world and the gift of hope to believe that our small efforts and weak prayers will help change the world and hasten the return of the King.

February 20, 2015

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