



SPIRIT ROOTS

Miramar Retreat
Center
June, 2009



**Deepening our Spirituality
for Today's Challenges**

*Our Theme:
What is Spirituality in
Today's World?*

Getting a Hold of
What is Most Important in
Your Life

WHY A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER?



The tree as our logo for our spirituality newsletter implies that we are beings meant to grow deeply into our daily reality, rooted and incarnated into the

stuff of our lives and yet challenged to stretch and grow into the fullness of God's dream for each one of us. As change and ~~uprootedness~~ take precedence in the global scene, we as God-searchers and people of faith are challenged to find and explore our spiritual roots and make a difference in our web of relationships.

We hope that these short reflections will stimulate your spiritual creativity and invite you to embrace what is most important in your life. If you find these messages beneficial and helpful, pass it on to another. We will help you make connections between life and grace, the abundance of opportunities we have to connect our personal stories to the larger Story of our dreams.

We hope to contribute to your spiritual growth through stories, reflections, questions and insights into the greatest adventure we are called to: our inner life with the God who becomes One of us.

We invite you to become a partner with us on our common search for new life. It is hoped that you can become part of our spiritual community of searchers and dreamers!



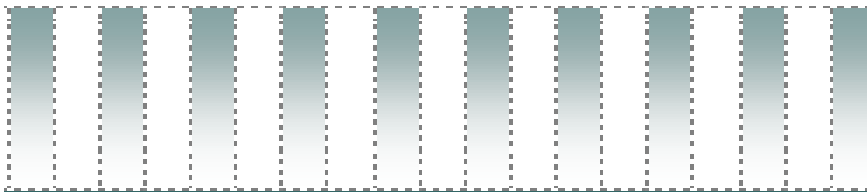
What is Spirituality?

Probably the clearest understanding of Christian spirituality is found in St. Paul's letters to the early churches. Reflecting on the life of Jesus who had called himself the "Way", Paul discovered that the "Way" was His paschal mystery—the suffering, dying, rising and ascending of Christ, our Lord.

The paschal mystery is best understood in connection with the entire gamut of salvation history. Humankind and the cosmos have been redeemed and the mystery (the "secret") of this divine plan of salvation was revealed and brought to fulfillment in Christ. He is the revelation of God's mystery, and in Him and through Him it is fully made manifest. Pre-Vatican 2 spirituality tended to stress the ~~sacrific~~ sacrificial action of Christ, by what was accomplished on the cross. Vatican 2 enlarged that vision to include the resurrection and ascension. The liturgy of Pentecost in its preface proclaims: *"Today you sent your Holy Spirit on those marked out to be your children, by sharing the life of your only Son and so brought the Paschal Mystery to its completion."*

Vatican 2 throughout its sixteen documents had proclaimed there was only one spirituality in the church and in the world—the paschal mystery of the human Jesus. In its fullest sense, the paschal mystery continues in the life of the baptized, the members of Christ's Body, the church. It can be said that the hallmark of post-Vatican 2's spirituality is that our daily human life and worship are now experienced as Christ living in us undergoing that same mystery. No one suffers or cries alone. No one celebrates or rejoices alone. Christ comes disguised as our life.

A key thing in this post-Vatican 2 spirituality is awareness. Awareness and appreciation of how Christ is now using our humanity, our human hands, minds, wills and



hearts to accomplish His saving purposes today. A final, more recent development in understanding of the paschal mystery concerns the natural universe, especially this planet earth of ours. The object of redemption and salvation is seen to be not only in us humans but in the entire cosmos. The eternal Divine Word that brought creation into being took on our "stardust". His yes to His humanity was so radical and universal, that when he spoke to the water, it turned into wine; a raging storm at sea calmed at the gesture of his hand; leprosy turned into the skin of a child at His word.

We are aware of nature's paschal mystery in our annual four seasons; daily in the rising and setting sun. Every living plant on earth, we notice eventually dies, only to drop its seeds and rise again. St. Paul saw *"a plan for the fullness of time to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth"*. (Eph. 1:10) *"There is only Christ"*, he said, *"He is everything and He is in everything"*. (Col.3)



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We would like this newsletter to be for you!
We want to hear from you!
If you have any reflection or insight about any one of our articles, or suggestions for future articles, we invite your personal response.

You can email us at:
tomumbas@hotmail.com
Attention: Fr. Tom Umbas, SVD

All responses will be gratefully acknowledged.

SPIRITUALITY AND WOMEN



Mary of Magdala: Disciple and Preacher

Mary of Magdala was a woman treasured by Jesus as disciple and friend. She has also been the victim of false labeling throughout Christianity. She has been described in art and sermon as the woman who threw herself at the feet of Jesus washing his feet with her long, beautiful hair. Her hair was loose which meant she was definitely a prostitute for only they would dare loosen their hair in public. She has been described as a woman of the streets sought after by countless men.

There was lots of confusion in the early Christian tradition about who she really was until finally in the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great solemnly declared that she was the woman cured of seven demons in Mark's gospel. She was Mary of Bethany who anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume in John's gospel and she was the famous sinner in Luke's gospel who anointed Jesus' feet. This proclamation remained until finally in the latter part of the 20th century she was officially released from this misunderstanding.

Mary of Magdala became the patron saint of the cosmetic industry. She was also the subject of morality plays that pictured her as a sinful prostitute. In the 13, 14, and 15th centuries her feast day, July 22, was known as a "double" which meant if you did not go to mass that day you received a "double punishment". And there were many others things said of this woman that were oppressive to Mary as well as to all women throughout the centuries. And so who is the real

Mary of Magdala that Jesus befriended and called to discipleship? She is Mary who was cured of seven demons, most likely demons of self-doubt, anxiety, fear and other things that caused her spirit to be crippled and she is the woman Jesus called to be the first preacher of the Good News after the resurrection. And what might her story have to say to us in the 21st century? Perhaps we need to let Jesus ask us the question he asked Mary in the garden, "Who are you looking for?" In John's gospel one of the marks of discipleship is to "look for Jesus". Is this who we are looking for? Or are we focused in too many directions? Are we too confused, disoriented to look on the face of love that beckons us to follow in an intimate, radical way?

Mary was confused in the garden. Her loss was great. The one she loved and was loved by was gone. And in the garden, she did not recognize him in the beginning, so blinded by loss, but then Jesus calls her by name, "Mary". In that intimate moment resurrection happens. Seeing with physical eyes was not enough. She needed to hear with the ears of her heart. It is not surprising that it was hearing that evoked resurrection. Hearing is the first sense we experience at birth and the last we experience at death. So in hearing she is transformed. Jesus summons her to new life. She is able to recognize his voice amidst tears and confusion like the sheep in the story of the Good Shepherd.

Is this the voice we are listening to? We are called like Mary to go and tell our sisters and brothers about Jesus the Risen One. We are called to let the God of surprises challenge us to new ways of being Good News.



Miramar Retreat Center

A ministry of the Divine Word Missionaries

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