

Spiritually – A Communion of People

Spiritually- a word that tends to get bandied about a lot. But what does it mean? It is not uncommon to hear people say, "I'm spiritual but not religious". But, for me, spirituality and religion go hand in hand, because I see religion (organized religion) as being formed in community - a communion of people with a shared mission - a communion of people who support one another - a communion grounded in a relationship with God, in and through Jesus Christ - a communion of individuals on a shared spiritual journey! As individuals within the community, we may have different ways of exploring, experiencing, and expressing that journey, but we are still there for one another, and we express that unity in worship through shared prayers and hymns; and we solidify that unity when we join together at the Lord's Table.

Spirituality, of course, is not the sole property of the Christian church. All of the world's great religions have their own experiences and disciplines, and there are times when sharing their wisdom can be beneficial for our own experience; but my primary concern is spirituality from a Christian point of view.

Spirituality takes us beyond the acceptance of doctrinal beliefs and has to do with relationship- an intimate relationship with the sacred and divine. It is about a search for God, i.e., a desire for a deeper knowledge of God, and of God's desires of Creation.

There are two Greek words that describe different approaches in the search for knowledge of God - apophatic and kataphatic. Apophatic is related to what was called the 'via negative' in medieval theology. Basically, it suggests that we cannot really say what God is - only what God is not. The medieval mystic, Meister Eckhart, wrote that, God is found through a process of subtraction. The apophatic insists upon the rejection of all images of God. The kataphatic insists that because God is incomprehensible human beings need metaphors, words, and images in an effort to understand and experience the reality of God.

I tend to see it both ways. Whenever we decide that we have found a definite concept of God, we have actually created an idol. But we also need to use metaphors, words, and images as tools for exploration on our spiritual journeys.

There are many approaches and disciplines to aid in our spiritual journeys Christians. Of course, the Bible is our primary authority, but the writings of the early Church Fathers as well as the writings of later theologians, and clergy, especially those referred to as mystics. Prayer, meditation, and contemplation are particularly important. And it's also essential that we include Christian acts of love and charity. As it says in the book of James, "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead."

I will be writing more about these things in future midweek meditations.

Love and peace, David