

SPIRITUALITY IS BEING COMPLETELY HUMAN

Fr. Maria Arul Selvam

St. Paul's Seminary, Trichy

Introduction

According to Sobrino¹ "spirituality is purely and simply the actualization of the spirit of Jesus in our own times." He adds "it is a contemporary expression of a very old endeavour: to live according to Jesus' spirit and reflect on that experience of discipleship. Spirituality is not so much a set of abstract ideas or a collection of words as it is a response to God's liberating presence amongst us. It is a reflection on the power of God's grace, which transforms and challenges the individual disciple and the human community."

Though Sobrino writes in the context of the third world realities in terms of a liberating spirituality, some of the concepts he uses in-between the lines are very interesting to our work. One of them is the notion of contemporality and its relation to spirituality. He mentions also that spirituality is a reflection of Jesus' own experience of humanity which leads us to actualize the same in our own experience and understanding. Above all he makes it very clear that the spirituality is not so much a set of abstract ideas or a collection of words but instead it is a holistic response to God's presence amongst us; amongst everything in the Universe.

A Holistic Approach

A holistic approach involves integrating all the three elements, namely the body, the mind and the soul into a person's experiential

¹ J. Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1988, p. 10.

spirituality rather than a division of body pitted against the spirit. For many centuries the Western Christian tradition was influenced by the Platonic, Cartesian and Manichean beliefs which spoke of a dualism professing "either-or" mentality that saw body and spirit opposite to each other whereas a healthy holistic spirituality expresses a "both-and", a complementary attitude of integration and inclusiveness. Actually the holistic spirituality does not want a segregation of the secular against the sacred, "this world" against the "the next world", the individual against the social and the spiritual against the material. This is because the body and the spirit are closely knit together and any bodily expression will certainly have an impact on the spirit. That is why for an internal silence an external disposition is called for. And so yoga, zen, body relaxation and sense awareness methods bring about a dramatic inner stillness. One should know that an approach to a holistic spiritual life reminds us of two beliefs (1) the seeking of holiness is not in anyway against the human growth; and (2) those who try to lead a religious life are not exempt from the human condition, i.e., they need to undergo all the human struggles like any one to grow in wholeness.

In this respect a holistic spirituality gives importance to senses, to feelings and emotions in prayer and meditation. It was pointed out by someone that psychology and theology are in search of truth. In psychology one tries to understand the personality of a person, which may eventually help him/her to transcend the humanness and be connected to the supreme being as Jung propounded. Man is created in the image of God. Thus theology when it studies the nature of God in relation to the incarnated Christ, once again through the humanity of Jesus, we realize the transcendent being's nature of the reality, namely the truth. So in our spirituality psychology has an important role to play. In psychology importance is given to senses i.e., to feelings, emotions and images.

Verbals and Non-verbals

We use non-verbals in communication much more than verbals. It has been found that only 7% of communication takes place through words and the rest through non-verbals, namely gestures, postures, pitch, tone etc. So spirituality too needs to make use of the non-verbals more. One can see the way the charismatics pray. When they pray, they use a lot of non-verbals. This brings about healing due to the emotional discharge. Every emotion taken in or let out has an energy involved. For example an intensive anger creates such a tremendous energy in the body that one can notice it in the heavy breath, reddening of eyes and cheeks and changing of facial expressions. Similarly raising of hands, closing of eyes, praying loudly, clapping of hands, dancing, holding and touching the other and so on in the charismatic prayer groups produce energy that helps in healing a person.

Connection to Childhood

Humans are created in the image of God. We have all the potentialities to grow as fully human persons. The childhood experiences have got a great deal to do with our later adulthood behaviours and have an effect in spirituality. If the child is ignored, ill treated or oppressed by the parents or those closely associated with its growth, the negative experiences will certainly affect the child in the future, in its understanding and perception of God. For example a child born to strict parents is going to perceive God as a strict, punishing God, not a loving God. All the positive experiences of the child will help for a positive understanding of God, when he/she becomes an adult. The negative experiences of childhood days will certainly have a damaging effect on the person's thinking, feeling, perceiving etc., at the adult stage. But positive influences of the childhood will have a positive effect in its human development.

If some people adopt too legalistic an attitude in the church or anywhere in the society, it could be that they had some negative influence from some persons, for example from their parents in their childhood

days. It is not the aim of this article to go into the matter of childhood experiences in depth. The childhood experiences and the result of conditioning or programming of the childhood wounds remain in the unconscious of that person, the result of which negative behaviours ensue when they grow into adults without consciously knowing their unhealthy behaviours.

Uniqueness of Humanity

From what is discussed above, it is understandable how difficult it is to have a uniform spirituality. It is the responsibility of the individual to choose a particular spirituality from the available spiritual methods to have a healthy growth and union with God and with one another. And also when one chooses a particular or a few spiritual methods, one needs to be clear that the experience(s) should in no way destroy the humanness. Rather the choice should help that person to fully develop and attain the fullness of the humanity of Christ as put forward by St. Paul,

“In this way we are all to come to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the son of God, until we become the perfect man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.” (Eph 4:7-16).

Gentle Approach

At the same time, the process and procedures used in spirituality need to be simple and not complicated. A gentle approach is necessary. When we experience and use them we need not be disheartened or disappointed. There should not be any compulsion within oneself, on the other hand it needs to be derived from the pure love of the heart. Any failure or inability to proceed with a kind of spirituality should not disappoint that person. Only gentle perseverance with a sense of accepting the weakness is needed. For example inability to pray at a particular time should not make that person frustrated but on the other hand, he/she needs to accept that moodiness is part of our nature and the difficulty faced need not be taken as a failure. Instead a sense of gentle, loving

perseverance is the key to success in praying. There needs to be an easy loving commitment rather than violence to oneself when praying. Contrary to the bossing and aggressive nature, a gentle persuasion is the practical key for the success of an authority figure to get the work done cheerfully.

Sensory Approach

Psychology plays an important role in our spirituality. Our psyche works to the fullest level when one understands oneself better. If a person can at a time know his/her own feelings and emotion, it is spirituality indeed because that person could easily actualize his/her humanity to the fullest extent. Often our head (intellect) is given more importance than our heart. We have lost to a larger extent the perception of using our senses. For example, how many of us use both hands equally for performing things? We know how to move forward, but do we try to walk backwards? How much do we use touch, noise, gestures etc., the non-verbals in our communication? Very little. We humans tend to use only the right brain a lot, and very little effort is made to use equally the left and the right brain. Though women use the left brain a little more than men, still the effort to activate the left brain is only meagre. As pointed out earlier in communication verbals used are only 7%, whereas the non-verbals, namely the gestures, the postures, the pitch, rhythm etc. are not given that much of importance by the psyche's attention. In psychology it is well known that every body has its own language. And the other body could understand this language whether the psyche understands it or not. For example when a dog chases you, and if you just turn around and look straight at its eyes, then it will stop and will not harm you. At that time there is no verbal communication involved. Still it stops. What is the reason? The reason is simple. You say non-verbally through your eyes that you are not afraid and the canine understands your body language. So, we need to recover and reclaim our non-verbals as much as we can, then only we could become fully human. This is why the charismatic prayer groups, the pentecostals and the sectarian Christian groups are so successful in attracting the

Christians from the established denominations. In their prayer meetings some actions are involved. Dancing and singing, clapping and moving of bodies help people to bring out their emotions. When you reactivate your senses to the extent possible, when you use your left brain more and more release your emotions by dancing and moving the body, you are being healed. It is a very important aspect of fulfilling part of the command of Jesus' own words. "Go into all the whole world and proclaim the good news... they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mk. 16:15-18). A simple way to heal people is to make them dance, move or shake their bodies, make them laugh and so on. The liturgical services in our churches are still now performed with so much of seriousness, with a dutiful attitude in stiffness and dullness. It is not the laws that make the liturgy boring, but it is the way we, each of us, interiorize the same that makes it lively or not. When we stand when we need to, when we sing when we need to and when we raise our hands, move our legs and bodies paying attention to all sensory things in the church, namely to the rituals of the liturgy then we become fully alive and healthy, and our liturgy becomes beneficial.

Our non-verbal communication may be a reason for sour relationship even though the words may be positive in communicating. Take the case of inviting guests to our homes. We ask them to have food with us, though there is not enough food that day to share. Our body language may contradict our words of welcome. Psychologists say that women even before uttering a word to a person, but by simply looking into the eyes of that person are capable of saying whether that person is good or bad to relate to. How is it possible? It is possible only through reading of the body language. There are mothers who could easily make out from the facial expression of the child it's needs. From what have been discussed so far, it is understandable that one needs to fully use the verbals and non-verbals so as to bring out the fully human aspects in spirituality.

Inner Child (IC) Spirituality

Having an inner-child experience will lead us to an in-depth spirituality. As said earlier humanity is the basis for our spirituality. Inner child is defined as the sum total of all childhood experiences, positive and negative. Inner childhood is positive experience in so far as it has helped or shaped the child into positive adulthood characteristics. Inner childhood is a negative experience in so far as it has damaged the child's present adult pattern of behaving, thinking, feeling, perceiving, motivations, relations and so on. Both positive and negative inner child experiences influence our human development. An unconditioned inner child has all the potentialities when created because, it is created in the image of God. As a child we see spontaneity, truthfulness and creativity. The child at the same time will have a tendency to go after pleasure and destruction. However, parental negative attitudes, parental restrictions, prevention, control will naturally put the child in a wounded state and the child can not express the same openly because those who behave this way are important people closely associated in its development. So the child adjusts and tries to live according to the way the elders want. How many of wonderful things were given up in childhood in such situations! So to go back to see what had happened in childhood days is to gain the true self. Because of the conditioning the child has lost its true self and has acquired a false self. So, the purpose of the inner journey into one's childhood is to recover one's true self so as to regain once again the contact with the divine image in which the child was created.

To see the IC's woundedness, one needs to go back to one's own IC stage by trying to remember the childhood stage (below the age of 7) as far as possible. One may find it difficult to bring the images of that junior child, but it is not impossible. The IC spirituality lies in talking to the IC and recognizing the IC everyday as one grows as an adult, by bringing back to the memory the experiences of that IC. What can we talk to the IC? Within each one of us we have that IC, though the IC is subdued by the parents or others unconsciously in the upbringing, thereby

hampering the development of all the inborn potentialities. One can talk to one's own IC about this conditioning. One can ask the child to be spontaneous, truthful and creative. At the same time, the senior can make a deal with the IC like promising a chocolate or sweets or an ice-cream lest the child should go after pleasure or destruction. Such a regular dialogue each day for a certain amount of time will certainly help people to grow fully human and also to get healed from the childhood programmes or woundedness. Some psychologists say that diabetic patients could also use the same 'contract technique' with the IC so as to keep the intake of sugar down by this 'self talk'. Every adult has this childhood characteristics. One can be aware of this attitude within oneself. Dancing and singing all by oneself, massaging one's own body, listening to music, yoga etc. help to reclaim our true self. A pillow or a teddy-bear can be used while recalling the IC. This can help the person to talk to his/her IC so that he can kiss, dance and sing. In this connection using of the left hand (e.g. for writing by a right hander) can help our childhood experiences to come out. Going back into oneself and remaining in the awareness of the hurts of the childhood will help to heal the woundedness. This inner journey into the unknown of the unconscious is self-awareness and healing.

Awareness Exercises

Another important aspect of spirituality is to live in awareness. Awareness is to live in the present fully. It is a hundred percent living in the present. Often we recollect what has happened in the past to worry a lot in the present. Similarly we experience fear and anxiety by looking into the future. Thus one fails to notice the reality of the present. A relaxed body is the best preparation for a relaxed mind and the vice versa is also very true. For example, every time we look at a tree, it has to be a new one at each time. But actually we tend to imagine that we see as the same tree every time. It is so because we are used to this kind of perception. But in reality each time one looks at the tree, there must have been some change; some leaves would have fallen from the tree and some new tender leaves

would have grown by now. There could be a little more growth compared to the last time one saw it. So also as a matter of fact, one cannot see the same person a second time because there should be at least some little change physically as well as mentally compared to the previous time. However, we tend to see a person not in the state he/she is, but we tend to see him/her with our likes/dislikes (with preconceived perception) and so possibly fail to see the reality. On the other hand when we start to see things in the present with a hundred percentage awareness, then there will be creativity in our perception. It is very important to have awareness in our spirituality, so as not to have guilt feeling, or low self esteem by looking at our past weaknesses. Often one finds people very much steeped in guilt feeling, as a result of which they fail to forgive themselves, even though God in his unconditional love has already forgiven them. Such people often tend to project the same view on other people, in the family, in the society and also in the church.

Also, not living in the present is the reason for fear and anxiety. Often when one, instead of living totally in the present, allows himself/herself to be obsessed with the future events that will lead him/her to anxiety and fear. This certainly will affect one's spirituality. At this juncture Jesus' words are consolation, when he tells us not to worry about the future. He says that with all our worries of the future we will not be able to stop the falling of a single hair. His parables of the birds of the air, the flowers of the fields tell us that we should not worry about the future but live in the present alone (Mt. 6:25:34). Living in the present makes us live in the fullness of life at that moment which is here and now.

Awareness Methods

i) Avoiding Thoughts

How to remain in the present? One way is to try to live in the present. E. Tolle says that we need to be in awareness to catch the next thought just 'like a cat watching a mouse hole' for the prey in stillness.² In

²E. Tolle, *The Power of Now, Yogi Impressions*, Mumbai, India, 2001, p. 77.

such a process one need not use 'violence', but gentleness and kindness to oneself. Any failure or weakness in the processes of awareness need to be handled gently and sympathetically so that we may not be distracted and consequently dissipated by our worries. Our psyche will co-operate very well in our spirituality along with the body, when it is handled gently. As we try to be aware of the next distractive thought, we can realize that the time gap between one thought and another is increasing. Gradually that time gap may increase even more and more as we practise. One is not sure whether the distraction will completely go away by trying more and more; but this is what J. Krishnamoorthy and others suggest. What is the use of avoiding thoughts? Avoiding thoughts leads us to stillness and stillness is the process used by many mystics to enter deep into oneself, to the divine and through this to the Kingdom of God.

ii) Concentrating on the Breath

Concentrating on the breath is also an important technique in spirituality. God is spirit indeed. Jesus when he rose from the dead, breathed over the disciples and gave them the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:22) and then sent them for his mission. The breath is widely used by Buddhists, Hindus and others to bring about stillness in them. In Vipassana retreat, one is made to sit in stillness and trained initially to concentrate on the breath alone between the upper lip and the nostrils. Such an exercise helps the person later to see the sensations all over the body in a steady state of mind. Thus making the mind concentrate on breathing in and breathing out is used to achieve stillness.

Intensive Journal (IJ)

Almost all the mystics of Hindu, Buddhist and Christian traditions have used the awareness of breath, to empty themselves of thoughts so as to go deep into themselves and eventually transcend the body and experience the divine love. Ira Progoff, a Jewish psychologist, who knew Christianity so well and combined his background of Judaism with Zen

and Sufism has brought out a process of meditation called Intensive Journal (IJ). In that IJ one looks back at the past to plan for the future, not in the usual way as done in a retreat. It is done rationally so as to get in touch with the inner movement of life. Any believer can use it because it has no doctrine of any religion. In that experiential method only tools and methods are given. So one can keep on using them in future counselling. Here the aim is to grow in self awareness, self acceptance (friend to yourself) and in self direction for one's future growth. The principle involved is a self integrating principle to bring unity and purpose to life. The technique involved is writing and so it is called *Intensive Journal* (IJ). Two prerequisites for IJ are stillness and spontaneity. Stillness involves an inner silence at every level and putting away of distracting thoughts, reasoning and so on. It needs to be worked at the heart level, not at the head level. By concentrating on the breath, one needs to relax. Then the breath needs to be slowed down to a comfortable level without any force but at the same with the awareness of the breath alone. This is done until one reaches a twilight stage which is neither like falling into sleep nor an awake situation. Now this is the stage one needs to start writing down whatever comes to his/her mind spontaneously without censoring any thing. No thinking is involved and it is a non-rational state. They come from the unconscious level of the psyche. The things that can come, include images not only visual, but also auditory and other sensory feelings, emotions, impressions. They need to be recorded. Thus our inner experience is recorded and they alone are important. They are triggered experiences. IJ deals with physical, social and spiritual experiences. These images have meanings that can be interpreted only by the one who got them. The IJ is thus worked in a particular process. Thus the experience of IJ workshop according to Ira Progoff helps one "in drawing the present situation of one's life into focus in a broad perspective that includes both past experiences and future potentials while it opens deeper contact with spiritual and creative sources". Added to this, he says that "while one is thus engaged in positioning oneself in the movement of one's life, the

numerous techniques of the Journal Feedback method helps to know how to use the IJ continuously as an effective personal instrument after the workshop is over.”³

Breath and Spirit Workshop

A recent method of using the breath was taken up by Stanislav and Christina Grof for healing. It is called ‘Breath and Spirit Workshop’. Stan is a medical doctor and a psychiatrist and so also his wife Christina. The method is also known as Holotropic work meaning wholeness. Earlier, in the beginning of his work, he used the drugs LSD, Marjuvana to a useful level, to induce his patients to come to the Non-Ordinary States of Consciousness (NOSC). It is also called Non-Altered State of Consciousness. In this process the affective side (feeling-heart), the cognitive side (thinking-mind) and behaviour side (bodily act) are involved.

In this process one is made to lie down on a mattress with a sitter provided. There will be experienced facilitators, who would have themselves undergone the Holotropic experience over a hundred times to assist the person during the process. A dark room with necessary facilities is needed. The sitters’ and the breathers’ jobs are all explained well in advance by the facilitators. It is essential to use loud music during the breath work. The music involves sometimes trance inducing drum music rhythm, journeying music, slowing down music and more contemplative music. Musics used activate the physiology, but they are not causes of it. The experience varies from person to person. The music will be turned off at the end of the session. At the end of the session, when they come back to the original consciousness with the consent of the facilitators, they will go to a mandala room and using colours they do a drawing of the

³. Progoff, *At a Journal Workshop*, Dialogue House Library, N.Y., 1975, p. 13.

Class notes of the ‘Breath and Spirit Workshop’, Sadhana Institute, Midi Sadhana, Lonavla, March, 2003.

experience(s) they had during the workshop. The duration of the session may last from 3 to 3½ hrs. During the process they may have pleasant and unpleasant experiences. There may be vomiting, dancing, yelling, other different physical activities and also silent internal experiences. It is the sitters duty to see that the breather does not get injured when he or she is physically active. The activities of the breather will have a definite effect on the sitter other than his/her own breath work experiences.

The process of breath work is initiated in the following way. The breather is made to lie down on a bed with face up. Palms remain open and eyes closed under the observation of a sitter. It takes place strictly under the supervision of expert facilitators. In the beginning the facilitator initiates the breathers into the normal breathing rhythm in a relaxed mood. The breathers need to relax themselves by breathing into the whole body system without moving their body. Gradually the facilitator asks to breath faster in a rhythm without any force, to a comfortable level. When one starts breathing faster the breather can breath through their nose or if they want can also through their mouth. At that stage the facilitator stops guiding the breathers and the loud music will start at once. This is the time, due to the hastened and deep breath, the breather reaches the NOSC level. Number of this hastened strokes of breath that will lead into the Non-Altered State of Consciousness will vary from person to person. And it is also advised that at any period of the session if one come to realize that he/she is not in the NOSC level, then taking up again the deep, hastened breath will once again take back the person to NOSC level. During the process, the breather may experience both verbal and non-verbal (sensory) experiences. It may touch one's feelings and emotions as well. The breath work may take the person to the peri-natal experiences and the later part life experiences of the breather. It need not be in a chronological order. The experience can be trans-experience of their parents with the mythical and the mystical elements as well. It will be mostly the unconscious elements of the breather's past experiences that will emerge.

The role of the breather should be to let go to the urges in the NOSC level to the best of one's ability by way of trying to experience fully without checking them. The breather will be in a sort of conscious level (i.e., in NOSC level) but at the same time there will be an inner urge to do certain activities. At that time, one can also consciously check the urges. Then healing will not be possible from the 'Matrix' of the psychological blocks that have developed from the peri-natal stage till that time. It is also possible to have an experience of the pleasant moments in the 'Matrix'. Every body has a brilliant energy and it is experienced here. It is put forward by Stan that consciousness does not originate from the matter, but from beyond that. So through the Holotropic work one can transcend from matter to the spirit, to the Supreme. The work itself is experienced in the *sensory band* (e.g. visuals, auditory, kinesthetic experiences, energy levels, pains, magic sleep states), *biographic level* (e.g. not remembering but reliving of the significant events like emotions, sensations, sensory perceptions and integration of events at the physical level) and in the *perinatal level* of psyche (e.g. relationship between birth and death, birth as a life threatening event). The Holotropic work is strategies of self exploration. Through this, inner healing is taking place. Finally Stan by using the Breath work made it clear that for psychological, and psychosomatic ailments, along with psychological treatments and medicines one can also use the Spiritual Emergencies. Thus he has expanded the bowl of psycho-pathology even bigger with the help of spirituality. The more number of times one undergoes this breath work the more it helps the person to heal himself and to become mature spiritually. But the workshop is expensive, but still it is a unique experience.

Awareness Exercises or Meditation

Another way of tuning ourselves to achieve awareness is to pay attention to the feelings and emotions of our body - to start with by sitting comfortably with closed eyes. After the start the person begins to be aware of the different sensations in the body from toe to the crown of the head.

Distractions may come during the process but one need not worry about the distractions or disturbances, but need keep on simply paying attention to the sensations. During the process, the person need not concentrate in one particular part of the body, but rather carries on proceeding upwards from one part to the other, paying attention to all types of sensations. The sensations may be itching, pain, pressing of the clothes or other pressures or movements however subtle in the body. In Vipassana as one continues to observe the sensations as the days go by, the sensations are easily noticeable even to the minute level. And at times there will be a flow of sensations like a current flowing from bottom to top and then top to bottom. But the notion of understanding of these feelings in Vipassana is different from this meditation. Here one concentrates only on the sensations continuously and at times it is even observable in a small area of the body like the area between the upper lip and the nostrils by paying no attention to other parts. According to Tony De Mello this observation of the feelings or sensations can be done for hours together in a small area of the body by an experienced person like him.

It is also possible to observe the feelings and emotions, without closing the eyes, by looking at nature, for example at a tree, or a mountain. One needs to observe or to be aware in the stillness state of all the feelings/emotions because of the sight. Initially there may be distractions because of the thoughts, but as time progresses, things will settle down to the feelings and emotions alone. In all these types the person who is meditating needs to have patience and have a resolve to carry on in making use of the heart instead the head (thoughts).

In walking also one can be aware of the feelings or sensations by paying attention to the legs. Mentally it is possible to talk to one self by naming the movements i.e., the way one raises his/her foot from the floor and the resultant effect of bending, the knee push and pull in the muscles, the upward and down ward movements of the foot and so on. The steps taken need to be in a very slow motion, so that each movements can be named in the self-talk. This kind of meditation can be carried out anywhere

and even when one is sleepy. Here again thoughts are avoided and the attention is focused on the one thing, namely the legs.

A New Approach to Spirituality

From what we have discussed so far, it becomes clear that spirituality needs to be looked in a new perspective. In our present understanding of spirituality, sometimes we think that spending long hours in prayer or adoration is needed for one's spiritual growth or maturity. This was so for centuries together. Some think that all the ordinary things that we do to sustain our life are not considered or not connected with our spirituality. For the sake of certain kind of spirituality the ordinary day-to-day care of oneself is given up, for example in abstaining from sleep during the night vigils of weekly prayers, fasting and praying, though for a very good cause. The aim of this article is not to criticize or to ridicule any kind of spiritual practices of the present time, but only to make things clear or to open a debate in the minds of people with the view of bringing about a new understanding about spirituality. In this connection the writer puts forward the following view. In his view, if Jesus, the Son of God has come into the world and lived as a fully human person, then it means that any action that throws out the humanness or pushes out the activities connected with human nature for the cause of spirituality certainly needs to be questioned. If we accept that Jesus is fully human, then all that is done to remain fully human is holy indeed and spiritual indeed. Jesus slept, walked, touched, spoke, related, ate and so on. Are they not needed to remain human? They are indeed necessary to live in this world. Then in that case, all our activities needed to remain in our human nature are indeed prayers and holy deeds! To feed ourselves to remain alive is prayer. To sleep to get ourselves relaxed is prayer. To touch someone to show our love, concern, support, consolation etc. is prayer. To walk is prayer. To think, to remain conscious is prayer. The sight is prayer. Hearing is prayer. Then the question arises as to what is not prayer. When our activities fail to remain human that may be not be prayer. If one sees beauty in anything,

one can get the feeling that beauty is one of the characteristics of God. Then it is prayer. If one works for justice, which is demanded by God through the mouths of many prophets, it is prayer. Where there is truth, it can only be derived from the Absolute Truth.

Let us be gentle in practising our spirituality rather than being "pushy" or "violent" or "aggressive". For example when the light goes off due to power cut, often our reaction will be one of non-acceptance and irritation. Instead of getting irritated if we could gently accept the reality that there is a power cut, then there is freedom within ourselves to proceed from the understanding of the reality to the action of a personal-liberative type. Also often when people see so many injustices being done in the society, the immediate reaction is 'how can they be?', a sort of aggressive denial of the reality unconsciously. But they are existing in reality. Instead, one needs first to accept the injustice as a reality and then from there to proceed to work on a solution to get rid of the injustice. So also, in our spirituality of looking into our own weakness there needs to be a gentle and kind approach of accepting rather than a strong and aggressive approach of accusing and condemning. For instance, if I am unable to pray, then first and foremost I need to accept that I am unable to pray. Instead, if I look at it rather aggressively and say "how a Christian, who has prayed so long is now unable to pray" then it becomes problematic. In such an attitude one sees only aggression rather than gentleness. It will be nice if we say to ourselves that it is natural to be distracted during prayer and then try to carry on praying. Then it will help us to succeed in praying. Forcing oneself to pray or following any one method of persistent 'pushy' types have not helped in any way. If one is unable to sleep, then it is of no use forcing oneself to sleep. On the contrary, if one resigns to it as a reality and gently closes his/her eyes to rest, then there is possibility for sleep.

Next, adopting the methodology, techniques and understanding of other religious spirituality and using the psychological advancement in our spirituality will only enrich our faith. On the other hand opposition to

such a combination will only be a loss in the deepening of our faith. For example our intention to pray all the time is easily achievable when we realize that whatever we do, say and think in our ordinary day-to-day context can be understood as prayer; it is only needed to be connected with the Divine. Even if we forget all about being connected with the Divine, we need not worry or feel guilty. In that case it is enough to be connected with the Divine, whenever we remember. For ages spirituality has been understood mostly as praying and worshipping intensively. It was regarded as a mental process and leading a moral life by observing the commandments. While not denying the same as described above, we have to accept that spirituality also needs to be a holistic which attempts to embrace the totality of a person's existence, including one's relationship with others and with the material world, a notion coextensive with life itself, which finds every human concern as relevant. Thus understanding spirituality in which every aspect of human life - psychological, spiritual, interpersonal and political - is involved is the need of the hour. With such an understanding working for justice, caring for the homeless, healing the sick, liberating the oppressed and proclaiming the kingdom etc. along with all genuinely human actions become expressions of spirituality.

Conclusion

To conclude, all our words, thoughts, and deeds that are part and parcel of the human growth process and every action for the sustenance and growth of the universe need to be taken as prayer, as spirituality and relationship with the Divine. Not considering them as spirituality (which are wonderful witnesses to God's creation) may be a negation of God's words which found them as good (Gen. 1:31). Though one may not negate openly, the practice found among us of spending hours and hours together in prayer, divisions of time as prayer time and non-prayer time, divisions of the secular-sacred, bodily-spiritual, temporal-eternal and so on, tend to indicate the same. A new spirituality needs to emerge in our schools of thought based on St. Paul's theology of praying continuously by being

connected with the Divine in every one of our day-to-day, ordinary, simple activities, thoughts and words. Thus one has to remain fully a human person to be considered as 'spiritual'. Why? Because, Jesus took up human nature and lived fully in it. So humanity is the basis of spirituality. St. Ignatius of Loyola's words are authoritative to support what has been dealt with so far. In speaking about giving praise to God he says the following and it sums up all what is said so far:

"The praise of God is the reason for man's existence, his essential duty, his very definition. Man is a creature of praise. Himself a liturgy, a living psalm, a sacrament of thanksgiving. Man is created to Praise."