

Living the Spirit
Fidelity

In this time of the year I want to reproduce two inserts from the past. The first is called Fidelity. It is fidelity that marks those who are truly faithful to the demands of a real Catholic Christian life. It is that virtue which will bring us to an eternal union with the God Who has gifted us with the faith, and gives us the grace to live the Spirit.

As we make our way through the challenges of life that affect our spiritual growth, we cannot be unaware that there are many crises within the Church and outside of it. Much attention is given to the clergy abuse scandal. However, if we are sensible of our own spiritual condition, we will be careful not to allow either the sinfulness of others or the horrors of being a victim to derail us from our own pursuit of holiness.

The Catholic world in which we live, if I may call it that, is trying to come to terms with many forces that can easily disturb our peace of soul. We must uphold the teachings of the Church, even when they make us feel uncomfortable. This discomfort often derives from the fact that we are forced to be politically incorrect as this world sees things. Our Catholic beliefs and culture, after all, is not a matter of politics.

A true Catholic simply cannot be pro-choice, if by that one means advocating abortion. The same can be said about same-sex “marriage” or assisted suicide or other moral questions. We will find ourselves being accused of denial of the rights of others, and of forcing our morality on the rest of our nation’s citizens. We are told we must admit the rights of atheists as equal to those of believers, even if this means that we must not have any public expression of our faith. This affects our public schools, our law courts etc. It is not meant to invade our Church.

In the midst of such accusations we must be all the more careful not to react with such emotions as violence – we do not tolerate bombing abortion centers, for example. We must not react with total passivity, however, by simply ceding our own civil rights. Sometimes we must pursue them with firm determination, as for example, our right to make legitimate protests within the conditions set by our just civil laws.

Catholics should not forget that there is a well-developed system of church laws. They cannot be set aside readily, if one wishes to be a true Catholic. Observing church law may mean some inconvenience at times. Even some disappointments. Think of how often some find it inconvenient to be present at the Sunday Eucharist! If we follow our lower nature, and put aside this kind of obligation, what can be said of our spiritual state?

In my reading on several occasions I came across the phrase adopted by Father Richard Neuhaus, “*Fidelity, fidelity, fidelity.*” He uses this as a summation of what will achieve some kind of solution for various problems facing the Church today. I think it can serve us well to examine ourselves about our own fidelity. Just how faithful am I – that is the question that may hold the answer to our future progress in spiritual growth. I say this conscious that we are the Church. I say it knowing how important the Church has to be for us. We are called to be a sacramental community. We are called to treasure the presence of Christ among us wherever He is found. Even in a thousand disguises, as the saints and poets have said.

Let us consider what a meditation on fidelity may mean for us. It may be the key to solving even some personal problems of the soul.

Most of us have a good idea of what fidelity is. In our context here it may be best to think of it as faithfulness. Being full of faith will mean that we are believers. Faith is believing and is a theological virtue. We believe in God. We do so with trust in Him. We believe the teachings of the Church because they are truth and we have come to know them.

Our faithfulness will require us to be faithful to ourselves. We must not easily set aside our faith. Today many Catholics are leaving the Church. One Pentecostal/Baptist professor has noted that this exodus is “in the thousands.” Some are falling for the invitation of the Mormons who are walking among us, seeking whom they may “convert.” Meanwhile, we hold back, lest our work of evangelisation is offensive to others. If we are faithful to ourselves, we will use the sacraments on a regular basis. Catholic fidelity cannot be divorced from the Eucharist, or sacramental forgiveness of our sins. Frequenting the Sacraments with due devotion will protect us from throwing away our Catholic faith and heritage.

Fidelity requires us to be faithful to others for whom we have responsibility. Many of our responsibilities have a vital connection to our faith. Let’s not forget that they may derive from a sacramental event – like marriage, which is indeed a holy state of things. Some derive from Ordination for those called to lead us in the Church. Perhaps we may be able to see some of our responsibilities as derived from the very nature of the law that God has implanted in our hearts.

When we examine if we are faithful to the institutions that form the fabric of our lives we become aware of spiritual reality. Perhaps this may mean being a worthy laborer in the workplace. Perhaps it may mean being an active member of our parish. There are many communities that come together to be a part of our lives. We must be trustworthy ourselves. We must try to make our institutions equally worthy of trust.

Over and above all, we will not grown spiritually, unless we are faithful to God. This is a fine phrase, but it takes a lifetime to exhaust all its meanings. First of all, we come to know that God is faithful. The Scriptures make that very clear. I have been impressed with how many times this truth is found throughout the Bible. He does not abandon us and keeps his Promises, and is generous with His gifts to us. Even when we are unfaithful, He will still be faithful. Of course, if we let Him!

We are faithful to God when we know God faithfully. We do not make a lesser god of our own making, of our own desire. Our fidelity coexists with truth. Let us not forget that Jesus said it all when he said: *I am the Truth* (and the way and the life). If we meditate often on this we will realize that it is real Person at the heart of fidelity. Can you see now how all the problems of the church ultimately will find answers in and from Him?

Finally, I believe that there is great joy to be found in fidelity. May you have that blessing! God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit bless you always!

Monsignor David Morrison

February 2, 2014