

## Pastor's Column

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### "The Holy Longing"

On the opening night of our Parish Family Retreat, Fr. Nick Punch's presentation was centered on "Spirituality for the New Millennium."

His talk was based on a book by Fr. Ron Rolheiser, "The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality."

The five elements necessary for a Christian Spirituality on which Fr. Nick focused are:

- 1) *Personal Prayer;*
- 2) *Private Morality;*
- 3) *Mellowness of Spirit;*
- 4) *Commitment to Social Justice; and*
- 5) *Commitment to a Faith Community.*

As Disciples of Jesus, we need to spend time in private prayer with our Master, just as Jesus did with his Father. Do we pray privately? Besides the celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday, of what does our daily, private prayer consist?

As Disciples of Jesus, we need to live, with a passion, the virtues and values of the Kingdom for which Jesus lived and died. We live this morality, publicly and privately, not because we have to, but because we know it is the right thing to do. It is the Way that brings peace and joy to us personally and to the world in which we live.

As Disciples of Jesus, we need to live with a mellowness of Spirit. Our world is polarized. Our Church is polarized. Can we stop labeling, stereotyping, criticizing, and condemning one another because of different views and understandings of things? What do we so often see when we watch television? People yelling at one another and degrading each other. The interchanges become "ad hominem" and not about the topic at hand. Can we enter into conversation with people with differing views to discuss those views, to find solutions, and not to tear each other down?

As Disciples of Jesus, we must be committed to Social Justice. Charity is not enough. We must also be about restructuring society and its policies so that more and more charity is not necessary. "Give a man a fish and he eats for one day. Teach a man to fish and he eats for a life time." It is much less expensive, in terms of time, talent, and treasure to give a man a fish for one day than it is to teach him to fish for a life time.

As Disciples of Jesus, it is absolutely necessary that we belong to a Faith Community. Commitment to a Faith Community in the form of time, talent, and treasure, is the way in which we are supported, encouraged, held up, and challenged in our beliefs and

values. Being a Christian is not "Jesus and Me." Being a Christian is "Jesus, the Faith Community, and me." We find our way to God through one another.

If you find these five elements of Christian Spirituality intriguing, I would encourage you to read Fr. Ron Rolheiser's, "The Holy Longing."

He begins his book with a poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe entitled "**The Holy Longing:**"

*"Tell a wise person, or else keep silent,  
Because the massman will mock it right away.  
I praise what is truly alive,  
what longs to be burned to death.*

*In the calm water of the love-nights,  
where you were begotten, where you have begotten,  
a strange feeling comes over you  
when you see the silent candle burning.*

*Now you are no longer caught  
in the obsession with darkness,  
and a desire for higher love-making  
sweeps you upward.*

*Distance does not make you falter,  
now, arriving in magic, flying  
and finally, insane for the light,  
you are the butterfly and you are gone.*

*And so long as you haven't experienced  
this: to die and so to grow,  
you are only a troubled guest  
on the dark earth."*

How do these words speak to you? What do they say? I would like to begin a discussion!

If you are so inclined, please reflect on these words and let me know your thoughts. You need to include your name and "own" your comments.

I will create a column centered on this poem and on your reactions to it.

Please respond before May 31. In June, I will share your thoughts and mine in a Pastor's Column.

Fr. Mike