

Pastor's Column

The Christian Reflection from the Children of Abraham Prayer Service

This is the reflection that I gave at the Children of Abraham Prayer Service on the Eve of Thanksgiving, Wednesday, November 23, 2011.

From time to time, I think about what would have happened to me if I were born a Jew or a Muslim? Now I think there may be some Jewish blood in me. My mother's family is from Poland, and her maiden name was Zacharias—a very Jewish sounding name. But I digress...

I was born a Christian, a Catholic Christian, and I became a priest. I truly believe that if I had been born a Jew, I would be a Rabbi today, and if I had been born a Muslim, I would be an Imam today.

Why? Because I was born with a yearning and longing for things spiritual, and a desire to talk about God and to encourage and help others find God and rely upon God for their journey of life.

I still remember one of the first questions of my childhood Catechism, and for me it summed up my entire existence. "Why did God make me?" "God made me, to know God, to love God, and to serve God in this world, and to be happy with God forever in heaven." So with this spiritual yearning, I relied upon the context into which I was born: my Catholicism.

I first learned from my parents who taught me their spirituality—by teaching me their prayers, by taking me to Mass on Sundays, and by their example of right living—their love of family and neighbor. Then I continued to develop my spirituality by relying on what the Catholic religion taught me through grade school, high school, college, and seminary.

Catholicism's doctrines, pastoral practices, rituals, activities, and so on, all helped me grow in spirituality, until that time when I made a decision to be a priest. And then, the Church affirmed the call that I believed that I heard from God to be a priest, and then the Church invited me into the priesthood.

I believe that I would have followed the same kind of journey if I was born into a Jewish or Muslim context. And I would have become a Rabbi or an Imam.

My point here is that we rely upon religion, whatever that Faith Tradition may be, to help us develop, grow, and mature into spiritual beings: to see this world in a different way, to see the world through the eyes of God.

This is the purpose of all religion, the purpose of all Faith Traditions, to see the world through the eyes of God.

We gather together this evening as people of different religions, but gather together as people of a common spirituality.

We gather together as a people who look at the world through the eyes of God—a God who loves all people, and who makes no distinctions about race, color, ethnic background, educational or economic status, sexual orientation, and creed.

The clergy here with you tonight are people who practice their religions in order to become more spiritual beings.

And to become more spiritual beings, we must be a people who love and serve all people without distinction.

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Church in Corinth, he talks about the three greatest gifts: faith, hope, and love. And he



Children of Abraham Interfaith Prayer Service—
Jews, Christians, and Muslims gathered the evening before Thanksgiving at St. Thomas
More to pray and celebrate together.



concludes that love is the greatest of gifts! He says: "If I have faith to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing!" Think about that: faith without love is nothing. If I am a faithful Jew, a faithful Christian, or a faithful Muslim, but do not have love, it means nothing.

God is not interested in our rituals and practices if we fail to be loving people, if we fail to care for others without distinction.

It is love, the greatest gift, as Paul states that propels us beyond faith and religion and into spirituality. It is in this area of spirituality which is beyond religion where we peoples of different faiths, different traditions can meet and celebrate our existence, our diversity, and our short time on earth.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest who was a theologian and a scientist, once said: "We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."

This is how and why we gather tonight. We come together as spiritual beings to celebrate our lives and our faiths, and to recommit ourselves to love, and to building a more just, peaceful and loving world.

We know that faith, hope, love remain, these three, but the greatest of these is love!

May our time together today deepen our commitment to be lovers...lovers of God and lovers of all that God has made!

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