



SPIRITUAL LIFE, DIRECTION

By Jennifer Thoene

I, as many young adults, have many questions in my life and desired to discuss them and my faith life with someone who could help me gain some understanding of my call and of my spiritual experiences. I also desired to work on my relationship with God. So when I returned to school last fall, I sought this type of a relationship with someone who would walk with me as I conducted my search for God. I found the kind of relationship I was looking for in something called spiritual direction, which was something I had never heard of and knew nothing about, but something I decided to try.

In my meetings with my spiritual director, I bring the issues that affect me, my concerns and thoughts, and examine these things in light of my faith journey. Gaining different perspectives from my spiritual director about what is happening in my life has helped me in my discernment process about my vocation in life. Through our discussions, I have tried to gain insight into where I am going in my life. I have found that conversing with another on a regular basis has helped me to integrate more fully my life of faith with the rest of my experiences. Taking the time to reflect every few weeks on how my life experiences are influenced by my faith has been invaluable to my search for God's presence in my life and in my struggle to live in God.

Many spiritual directors can assist one in ways to pray and meditate, but I have found that they can teach more by the way they lead their lives. As my spiritual director relates stories about struggles for understanding in her own life that are similar to my own struggles, she becomes a

model and a teacher for me in the ways she responded to those struggles. My experience with spiritual direction has also aided me in my personal discovery of the truth of the God we believe in, by giving me an outlet for my thoughts about God.

Spiritual direction has been helpful to me on my path to know God and to know myself. I have found that by making myself open to my spiritual director, I am making myself open to God because I believe that God speaks to us and guides us through others. I have also learned that as I discuss my struggle for understanding, I grow toward being a more holy and understanding person.

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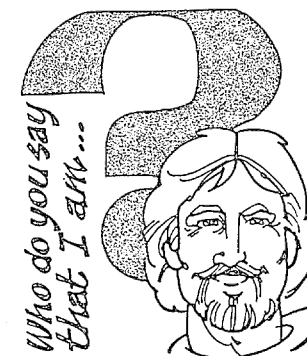


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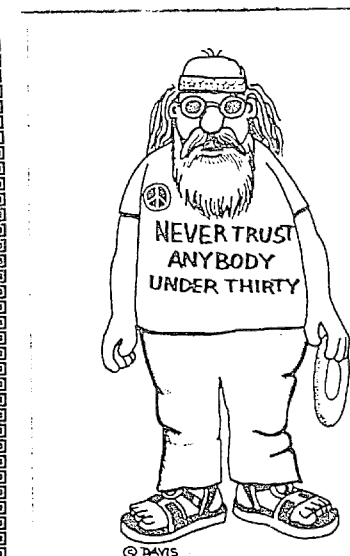


"I saw the Spirit come down like a dove." (1.32)



Notre Dame Religious Bulletin

May 7, 1989
Issue 27



Mary, the First Christian Woman, The first Disciple, Models Today's Christian Woman

As a child, I had only very traditional ideas of who a Catholic christian woman was. I was intrigued by stories of the lives of saints. These were women with true strength of character, as seen in their acts of courage, generosity, and gentleness. Biographers always depicted the saints as nearly perfect after their conversion to God. They never sinned, struggled or tarnished that halo that followed them everywhere. My grandmother was another model for me, one who embodied the very traditional Catholic. Grandma never missed a feast day, kept pictures and icons



of the Blessed Mother and Jesus throughout the house, had prayer cards tucked away into every corner, and said innumerable Rosaries on a set of well-worn beads. My only contact with women who were affiliated with a religious community was during the week of summer Bible School, during which time my awe for those nuns increased from the previous summer.

Through my contact with women here at Notre Dame and my own process of personal growth, I have expanded these limited childhood views of Christian women. In addition to the strength I saw in the saints and my grandmother, I believe there is a constant search for reality and a belief in truth in oneself and others. This is manifested by looking beyond the external factors--appear-



GENTLE WOMAN,
SPEAKER OF LIFE,
YOU SPEAK SOFTLY AND TEACH ME
THROUGH YOUR SUFFERING.
I LISTEN AND I STRUGGLE
TO UNDERSTAND
YOUR LANGUAGE
YOUR CULTURE
YOUR BEING.
THANK YOU FOR WELCOMING ME
AS I COME TO SERVE YOU
HUMBLY.
US AND
Maryland by Assistance

Mary remembered all these things. (2.19)

ance, opinions, lifestyle--to what comprises the heart of that person. The search leads one to acknowledge the imperfections and weaknesses that are inherent to human nature and to embrace these qualities in oneself and others. It is this acceptance that enables one to love freely and unconditionally as Christ and His Blessed Mother did. As one embraces humanity, she (and he) discovers and grows in faith in God. This faith becomes the source of a powerful (and awe inspiring) love that remains strong in the face of defeat and despair and continually reaffirms to the world, especially the children, the presence of God. ...Keri Poepppe, Sophomore Gov't Major, Badin Hall.

The moment your greeting sounded in my ears,



the baby stirred in my womb for joy



Mary,
the unmarried
mother,
the political
refugee;
Mary,
the homeless one;
Mary,
the disciple
and prophet;
Mary,
the third world
woman;
Mary,
the one
full of grace.



ARE THE CHILDREN TO RECEIVE
THE ARMS RACE FROM US
AS A NECESSARY INHIBITANCE?