

“Feeding the Spirit; Nourishing the Soul”

By John L. Heins '66

I believe harmony with God seen in Jesus Christ is ultimately worthwhile. We never reach this harmony “perfectly” but we do taste fully as we journey in life allowing God to speak to us. A healthy journey allows for both harmonious and unsettling encounters with God. I try to allow God to feed my spirit and nourish my soul. When I neglect this, I am swept up in the values of our culture that break relationships within my self, with that which is ultimate, with other humans, and with the created and evolving world of which I am intimately dependent on and responsible for because I am of the same chemicals and energy.

I believe our relatively affluent life is a tool entrusted to us. Our talents and resources can be used according to the competitive, self-preservation, death-ignoring, “meanness,” bigness standards, or they can be used in a journey of life that is grounded in meaning and purpose. I believe many good people act with blindness; there are many good people buying bigger SUVs, larger houses, larger stock portfolios, and expanding their pensions because they have the power to do so and a hunger to satisfy. To be pre-occupied with the promoted values of the world is a way to avoid the emptiness and darkness within and the surrounding evil and injustice.

I believe there is a way to be less blind. This way involves at least four practices that Jesus utilized: familiarity with not just the words but the Word of God and the Spirit of God as shown in the words and actions of Jesus, periods of confronting the demons inside us in private retreat, dialogue based from the soul with others and especially our significant other, and daily dialogue with God.

Humans need wilderness experiences such as spiritual retreats that allow us to attend to thought, feelings rumbling inside. It is only in facing the demons and dialoguing with them as Jesus did that we allow God to rise up within us.

I believe in the daily practice of prayer. Prayer is far from a formula for saying the right things at the right time to manipulate God to our way of thinking. Jesus listened to God in prayer and then prayed for God’s kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. Prayer allows me to become conscious of the presence of God and confront the demons of self-centeredness and fear within me; it calls me to again open my spirit to God’s unconditional love and injects soul energy into my daily life.

As Jesus practiced a “dialogue with the saints,” I believe it is important to talk with people in such a way that recognizes them as fellow creatures of God and fellow people of God regardless of their religious affiliation, social or economic status. It is important to me to see the face of God reflected in all the people I encounter.