Discovering God Through Action and Reflection

The Spirituality of the Young Christian Student (YCS) Movement



Mike Deeb OP

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A Spirituality of International Young Christian Students (IYCS)

Mike Deeb OP

Adelaide
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Table of Contents

1. Introduction 3

2. What do we mean by 'Spirituality'? 5

3. The Roots of IYCS Spirituality: Three Truths 7

4. Truth of Life 10
   - 4.1 A Spirituality of Integrating the Whole of Life 10
   - 4.2 A Spirituality of 'Seeing Concretely, Critically, and Deeply' 17

5. Truth of Faith 19
   - 5.1 A Spirituality of Judging Reality and our own Values with the eyes of Jesus Christ 19
   - 5.2 A Spirituality of Permanent Search for the Truth 25

6. Truth of Method 31
   - 6.1 A Spirituality of Transformation 31
   - 6.2 A Spirituality of Action 33

7. Conclusion 37

Other readings on IYCS Spirituality 40

Appendix 1: (a) Programme for a nine-hour Training session on Integral Spirituality 41

Appendix 1: (b) Questions for group Reflection during Training Sessions 43

Appendix 2: Programme for Five-hour Training Session on Integral Spirituality 45

1
Introduction

In our world, in our Church, and in our movement, there is much talk about the need for a deeper spirituality. People are faced with many frightening realities: poverty, inequality and unemployment; violence, domination and abuse of power at all levels; exploitation and corruption; the growth of an individualist, consumerist and competitive culture; and the difficulty in forming deep and lasting relationships. These leave many tormented by a sense of insecurity, fear and hopelessness.

In response, the world is being flooded by many types of spirituality offering some form of consolation and hope. Unfortunately many of these spiritualities are either reinforcing these realities, or are inviting people to escape from them! It is increasingly difficult to talk of a gospel that calls for a radical commitment to engaging with, and transforming this world in a spirit of love, openness and dialogue.

The Young Christian Students (IYCS), along with other like-minded groups and people, has always promoted a spirituality of critical reflection and action within the perspective of transforming the world. However, with the increasing academic pressure and rapid turnover of student leaders, and through the growing difficulty in finding available chaplains schooled in this spirituality, the understanding and practice of it has waned in many parts of the world.

To address this problem, over the past five years, the International and Regional Teams of IYCS have organised and facilitated many training sessions for chaplains, animators and students, with a strong focus on deepening reflection on this spirituality. Out of these sessions, a regular call has been made for their fruits to be produced into a publication that could be a resource for the training of chaplains, animators and students at all levels of the movement and beyond.

The current International Team of IYCS therefore commissioned this booklet as a response to that call. It is hoped that it will be an important resource in facilitating training and understanding of the movement's spirituality for all members, leaders, animators and chaplains of IYCS, as well as all others concerned about developing an integral spirituality. In particular, through living it out more profoundly in our daily lives, it is hoped that more and more students (and young people in general) will be fired with a deeper faith, hope, love and joy to make a difference and bring hope and change to our troubled world.

I am deeply indebted to various chaplains of the YCS (Pierre Ménard from Quebec, Fr Vincent Monteiro from India, Br John D'Cruz from Malaysia, Fr Jordi Mas Pastor from Spain, and Fr Jean-Paul Sagadou from Burkina Faso), whose insights and useful critiques have greatly helped to enrich this text. I am also very grateful to Meenuka Amaratunga and Manoj Mathew for their tireless efforts in doing the layout and design.

How to use this Booklet

This booklet can be used simply as a source for personal reflection. In addition, it can be used in a one or two day training programme in Integral Spirituality. To this end, some suggested programmes making use of the contents of the booklet are offered in the appendices.



Mike Deeb OP
Paris, April, 2007

2
What do we mean by 'Spirituality'?

The word 'spirituality' can evoke a variety of meanings, which are at times even in conflict with one other. It is therefore necessary to begin this reflection on the spirituality of IYCS by clarifying the sense in which we will use it.

Basically, by *spirituality* we mean 'the spirit with which we do things, because we believe that it is the way that most enables us to encounter God'. There are always two dimensions to defining a spirituality: by defining the *form* it takes, and by defining the *content* it contains.

The *form* that one's spirituality takes is the context, structure or mediation that every person or every group has to organise or find which enables them to discover, encounter and feel closer to the ultimate reality of God, Jesus or the Truth. Some find that they encounter God more profoundly through silent meditation; others through praying the rosary; or through singing and praying or dancing in a group; or through being outside in nature; or through Eucharistic adoration; or through gazing at icons or statues; or through reading the Bible alone; or through working amongst the poor; or through an intimate sharing with someone; or through being part of a large gathering/rally; or through wearing particular garments or objects; or through living in community; or through listening to music; or through recalling a particular saint; or through playing with children; or through having a meal together with others; . . . . We can continue with innumerable examples! Of course, each person can discover God in a number of these mediations or contexts. However, we are normally attracted to a way or a group that focuses on just one or two or a few of these mediations in particular.