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SPIRITUALITY

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We are speaking today a lot about spirituality. We risk making the term so worn out that eventually it does not have the effect of illuminating our existence that is expected or anticipated. In this meditation I would like to contribute to the clarification of this concept that is so important to the human and Christian experience.

The term spirituality comes from "Spirit" so spirituality has to do with the spirit and life in the spirit. But if we look at what is meant by spirit, we find that in our language, especially in Latin, 'spiritus' evokes the vital breath of our breath, evokes life, evokes movement as an inclination that causes what is alive by the spirit to move, to move in the direction of an object or the greatness that attracts. We can say that the "spirit" and therefore the "spirituality" in its etymological origin evokes a life experience that invites us to "come out" of ourselves. To paraphrase in a manner of speaking very dear to our Pope Francis, being spiritual, living spirituality, is letting the spirit move you, to put yourself in an 'external' attitude; an attitude that does not permit us to close in on ourselves.

From the Christian standpoint, the Spirit we refer to as "spirituality" is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that rested on Jesus in baptism and that He delivered into the hands of the Father at the time of his death. In Luke it is said: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"; and St. John: "Having taken the vinegar, He said: It is finished. And bowing his head *gave up his Spirit*". It was this Spirit that Jesus promised as a comforter and advocate for his disciples and breathed on them on the evening of resurrection day. We read in Saint John: "Then he breathed on them and said to them, *Receive the Holy Spirit. Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; those whose sins you retain will be retained*".

St. Paul also speaks of the Spirit we received at our baptism, the Spirit of kinship that makes us cry out Abba! Father! (Rom 8; Gal 4). Let's look to St. Paul in these two letters and these two quotes that say we have received *the spirit of kinship* by which we dare to cry out Abba! Father! It makes use of the Aramaic word *Abba* that Jesus said in his prayer to the Father, and we find in the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Olives, "he said Abba! Father! All things are possible! Take away this cup from me. Your will be done not what I will".

So spirituality is for us Christians to live according to the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit given to us, beginning with baptism and continuing in the other sacraments. Tertullian said that nobody is born a Christian; you become Christian through baptism. And Saint Cyprian of Carthage said: No one can have God as Father unless you have the Church as Mother. This way we are both children and brothers of God in our Mother Church. Conjugal spirituality must therefore be built and nurtured in the strength of the "Holy Spirit" in such a fashion that the spouses who love each other in The Lord are truly a sensitive and effective sign of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

P. José Jacinto Ferreira de Farias