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Experiencing Inspiration

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Experiencing Inspiration

If we reflect a bit, we might recall moments of inspired thinking that were unexpected; we were surprised – pleasantly – by a helpful idea that came to mind although we were not trying to resolve an issue or make a plan. The thought was recognizable as an inspiration by the sense of joy that accompanied it; we received a gift without having asked for one.

In times of need, many of us seek inspirations consciously, by waiting, by refraining from “trying too hard,” or by praying. We hope to become aware of a helpful line of thinking or the beginning of some positive internal process that we can pursue. We recognize inspirations as impulses that arise very quickly when they take place, and are accompanied by a sense of empowerment, and with energy for action. They are often perceived as seeds that will grow into something valuable, though we might have to spend time working with them.

Inspirations often begin a process rather than provide closure to a concern or need. One thought moves on to another, but we sense that even with the expenditure of some efforts on our part we are recipients of a gift. The experience of inspiration reveals how intimately God works in our minds, making use of our ability to think, remember, and imagine, and within our hearts’ desires and aspirations. As we learn to trust our experiences of inspiration, and to ask for them, we will become increasingly aware of their frequency in our lives.

Some people think that inspirations are reserved for people like artists, not “ordinary people.” But parents are often inspired when, with no preparation, they respond well to questions from their children or unforeseen needs of family members. Teachers frequently experience inspiration as they search for better means to draw students into a learning process. Some sales persons are inspired in the helpful responses they make to customers who have very specific interests. All of us receive inspirations, probably more often than we consciously identify.

Not all our ideas are inspired; many thoughts have no connection with inspiration. We are capable of considering how to manipulate other persons, how to accomplish goals devoid of ethical consequences, or how to gain for ourselves any number of selfish objectives. We might “have our way,” but lack any accompanying joy, indicating the absence of the Spirit. We are capable of creative selfishness, but the

benefits are not those of consolation, only the lingering sense of "is that all there is?"

When we are under the influence of inspiration, there is nothing we would rather do than continue what we are doing, even if it would be considered hard work. Would we really prefer instead some form of entertainment? No. While inspiration moves in our minds and touches our spirits, our present experience is more interesting than any imagined pleasure that could be derived from some other source. The difference between inspiration, which resonates perfectly with our interior senses, and all other stimuli, is very much like the difference between being involved in an interpersonal experience of love and being occupied with a game of solitaire. When we are inspired, we are in contact with the gift and the loving giver. Outside the times of inspiration, we are more aware of ourselves, and are probably less conscious of the gifts we have received.

Inspiration is an expression of God's love that is not just a warm regard for people in general, but a particular, personal nudge that is given to us as individuals - as if with a knowing smile on God's face - and an invitation that challenges us to develop and stretch our talents of mind and spirit. Love calls us to become more loving ourselves, to become like the source of inspiration. Through inspirations we find that life in keeping with God's intentions is more attractive than repulsive, more energizing than depressive, and far more valuable than any other possible direction we might take.

Experiencing inspirations is one of the great privileges of being a human - a child of God.