

Life-Affirming Gifts

Reflecting on the paper “Spirituality and Sustainability” by Brother David Andrew

“In our present times, we believe the mighty wind of God’s spirit is stirring up people’s imaginations to find ways of living together, based especially on the full community of all life: including love of nature and love of the poor.”

Brother Andrew quoted the above from what the Roman Catholic Bishops of Appalachia said about how agriculture and communities could be made to be sustainable through spiritual revitalization.

“These sustainable communities will conserve and not waste, be simpler but better, keep most resources circulating locally, create sustainable livelihoods, support family life, protect the richness of nature, develop people spiritually, and follow God’s values ...”

First we need to “steep” our own spiritual selves, as one might steep a good pot of tea. “We are the leaves, the bodies immersed in a broth of mystery, absorbing the way of Nature and the way of the Transcendent.”

Make this spirituality “a way of living and being which has informed your thoughts, your words, your choices and actions.”

When people come together in the context of an enriched spiritual milieu, there can be a kindling of new life in the community.

Social, economic and agricultural improvements that are based on strong spiritual principles will result in sustainable ways for moving ahead into the coming generations.

I especially appreciated our speaker’s focus on Nature being an important resource for nurturing our spiritual selves. He spoke of our “kinship with the earth”, of “being one in the web of life”. “Earth is like a scripture, the original word”. For rural people, whose lives are so intimately tied to the land and the extended community, these words help us find a footing for moving forward in our spiritual formation.

Equipped with spiritual character, mysterious and elusive though it often seems, we are fueled to help each other look toward our long-term (sustainable) future.

“We can learn to be partners with nature and with God; with a spirituality ... that sees no contradiction between the wedding of Spirit and Earth ... This is a good space for us to be in.”

(Reflections by Joyce Sasse, January 2010)
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