



Nurturing a culture of spiritual formation

Responding to this priority is for me both difficult and easy! Difficult because it is something that I wouldn't normally talk about or share with others. Easy because what I do in this area of my life is what I imagine many do, and therefore it isn't greatly creative. For me four actions that I find helpful in realising this priority include:

1. *Regular commitment for reflection and prayer.* Looking at the daily regime of the Church's monastic spiritual families we learn of the importance of a regular commitment to daily reflection and prayer. For all religious groups that have a contemplative focus to their lives, reflection and prayer will always come first. As most of us don't live in a contemplative community it wouldn't be possible for us to adopt their daily program however most people could still commit to a regular 5 or 10 minutes each day. In being faithful to this commitment I find it helps to link this to regular daily practice such as exercise time, beginning and/ending the day, before/after a meal, traveling to/from work.

2. *Simple and realistic goals in realising this priority of personal 'listening' to bring Christ-life to birth for others.* These personal goals can best be expressed by simple actions (habits) that put me second to the needs of others. Taking time to listen to another person's story however 'uninteresting' could be a simple example of this action. Lending a helping hand before being asked. Looking out for another who may be going through a difficult period in their life are also examples of some simple and realistic goals.

3. *Personal reflection and sharing on the gospel.* Here again this exercise needs to be grounded and connected to life. A real Christian prays, Karl Barth wrote, 'with the Bible in one hand and the daily newspaper in the other'. In carrying out this action I need to give myself and others permission to freely reflect and share on the gospel. In the past I tended to rely too heavily upon what the 'experts' would have to say about a particular passage of the gospel. These days I trust in my personal insights and those of others. And then there is the 'Gospel of life'!!!

4. *Spiritual reading.* This doesn't need to be much more than a current book, a subscription to a journal such as the '**Table**' or good website. As well as reading I also find music and song helpful in putting before me the place of Christ with in my life.

Finally, *Water from the Rock* reminds us that every day we are immersed in this important part of our life whether we realise it or not: "Daily experiences are special places of encounter with God. We find God's presence in creation, in the events of every day – work and relationships, silence and noise, joys and sorrows, achievements and anguish, tragedy and death." WFR n.54.

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