

REFLECTIVITY / HUMAN GROWTH / RELIGIOUS LIFE AND FSC

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Psychologists and spiritual writers tell us that *reflectivity* is an essential aspect of genuine human living and happiness for secular persons and persons in the religious life. One of the main purposes of the postulancy and novitiate is to help *train* the young religious to reflectivity. After the novitiate, unfortunately this spirit of reflectivity can be lost due to lack of on-going formation (which is supposed to be taking place from after the novitiate up to the time of one's death).

What is reflectivity?

It consists of the following three elements: (1)

1) *Genuine awareness of one's self, one's true and authentic self.*

To attain this, a person needs periods of quiet/silence each day and an ability to slow down during these times both externally and internally.

2) Then, the awareness of one's real/true self leads to consequent relating of one's genuine self *to others*. Without a deep awareness of one's true self, a person relates *to himself* and *to others with masks*, with his non-authentic self. Persons who can relate on a deep level to other persons are persons who have a deep awareness of their real/true selves; in other words, persons who have *reflectivity*.

3) Then, when a person is able to relate genuinely his authentic/true self to *others*, he is able to relate his authentic/true self to the Other (God). Without reflectivity, genuine self-awareness, a person relates to God with masks and not on a deep level. If you want to teach a person to pray, *first* teach him how to have *reflectivity*, genuine *self* awareness. Prayer breeds on *reflectivity*.

The religious life has built-in helps to reflectivity: the quiet and silence in the initial formation years, and the retreats, days of recollection, times of mental prayer, spiritual reading, and quiet times of community life. Courses such as those at ISFA (Institute of Spiritual Formation of Asia) are geared to help the students be reflective, to have *reflectivity*.

Some questions for myself as a human being and as a religious:

1) Do I have reflectivity or genuine *self*-awareness? Have I lost reflectivity since the novitiate, (Even Scholastics can lose their reflectivity)?

Am I living life on a shallow level?

Is my life mainly my work and not *myself* as a worker?

2) Do I take time enough daily:

– to slow down externally and internally for some periods of the day?

– for mental prayer?

– for spiritual reading?

– for theological and scripture study (as was a requirement in our original Rule formulated by St. La Salle)?

– for genuine aloneness with myself (and especially after the supper hour)?

– to experience the presence of God?

- 3) Do I try to make my annual retreat and community days of recollection as *experiences of my true self in God's presence*?
- 4) Am I able to have depth relationships with others due to my genuine awareness of myself?
- 5) Do I relate my true self to God, or do I relate to God with masks, with my *unconsciously untrue self*?
- 6) Do I stay home in the community enough?
- 7) Do I take enough time each day/week for quiet reading of good literature.
Do I have an interest in good reading?
Do I have an interest in art?
- 8) Do I take enough time for relaxation each day? For adequate vacation times?
Do I try to relax on my vacations and to get away from my work for a while?
- 9) Am I discriminating in my entertainment, seeking entertainment that will both relax me and make me a better human being?
- 10) Am I too work-oriented to the detriment of my reflectivity life?
Do I have a sense of God's presence when I am working?

A CONCLUSION:

psychologists and spiritual writers say that genuine reflectivity is necessary for

- genuine human happiness
- for a genuine prayer life
- for a *genuine apostolate* which proceeds *from the inspirations of God within the person* and in God's presence.

Do I need a renewal in my life regarding reflectivity in my life?

Does my community need a renewal regarding the community as a community with reflectivity? •

(1) I first heard this explanation from the staff of Sangre de Cristo in 1973.