

Amen! May It Be So! *The Gift of God's Spirit*

In the total religious scheme of things, spirituality is unique. While our initial religious experience is filled with what we believe about God, faith, life, other people, and the world, all of which are important, spirituality focuses on one single matter—God's relationship with us. Spirituality focuses upon that vital hook-up that God has established with us and the far-reaching ramifications of this connection.

Unfortunately, it is necessary to defend spirituality against the frequent criticism that it is too focused on our feelings. Spirituality is not about our feelings but about *awareness*—awareness of God's immediate presence in our world and within our innermost beings.

It all begins with God. The promise of God to His people of old and to us has always been that we are never alone. God is

with us. Emmanuel! That part of the scenario never changes. What does change is our *awareness* of his omnipresence. Thus, it is vital for us to consider the matter of our *awareness* of God's existing presence in our lives. It is this *awareness* we need to sharpen if we wish to grow and mature spiritually.

There are several levels of awareness. One is superficial, illustrated by a hastily offered thanks at a meal. A second is moving, which we might experience as we listen to music. A third is psychological such as deep sorrow at the loss of a loved one. A fourth is serenity that is present when life is stormy. At this fourth level, we become aware that God's Spirit is dwelling within us, subduing our fear and anxiety while sparking calm and deeply felt joy.

As with all relationships, enhancing our relationship with God takes time, attention, patience, commitment, and tenacious hope.

The method is conversation. We might struggle with praying on the first three levels. The fourth level is simple. We scarcely say anything. We simply bask in the warmth and love of God's presence, trusting the ultimate promise that the Holy One lives and dwells within us creating joy and gratitude. It is life's most satisfying state of being.