

## Spirituality fills our tank

There are many analogies for our relationship with God – each of them revealing something different and none of them complete. Yet each analogy can help open our mind to different ways of engaging with God.

One analogy is that God is a source of spiritual fuel and we are a truck. Let's play with that idea...

We all run on spiritual energy. This is the source behind our emotional strength, our compassion and the love and friendship we share.

We drive around bringing acts of love and service to the community, but it wears us out. Even though we receive love and thanks from those we serve, it isn't enough. We need gas to keep us going. God runs the gas station and God's Holy Spirit is the gas. When feel empty we reach out to God by coming to church, praying, reading the Bible, etc.... In those moments of time intentionally spent with God, we are filled by the Spirit. Often, we don't realize it at the time because our engine is off.

Since our tanks are filled while the engine is off, the gauge doesn't move. It may not seem like the time spent in prayer is worth it because it doesn't seem like anything is happening, but it is. We can tell because when we forget to stop, we end up stranded on the side of the road calling out for help. We are filled with fear, sadness, anger, exhaustion or frustration.

God shows up on the side of the road as often as we need it. But running out of gas all the time is exhausting and it keeps us from sharing the love we have to share. There is a better way. One that does not involve getting stranded by the side of the road feeling stuck and panicked or angry over and over.

God invites us to stop our everyday busyness often enough and for long enough to receive the Spirit. We must stop everything – housework, work-work, chores, conversations, play, hobbies, everything. Just stop and open ourselves up to God. In this way, we are pulling into the gas station. Don't worry, it is a full-service station. We don't have to get out of the car and we don't have to pay. You only need to sit still and be open long enough for God to fill our tanks.

We do this through a particular kind of prayer called "contemplative prayer". This kind of prayer goes beyond talking to God. In this prayer, we are also invited to open our souls to God. There are many ways to do this, but the first step is to ask God to fill you and the second is to be quiet. No one can drive while they are getting refueled. We need to be quite, take off our gas caps and wait.

Setting the analogy aside, you can do this by simply speaking your hope to God, or by writing a letter to God describing your hope and/or longing. Then sit and wait a while in silence – for a few minutes or many minutes. Let the ideas that come to your mind drift by – don't chase them around. Simply let them go and notice things happening in the present moment – the light, sounds, air, chair, your body... Don't think about them, just notice them and present yourself before God once again – open and waiting. That is all. God will use this quiet time to fill your soul with Spirit.

It probably won't feel like anything is happening. Your engine is off and the gauge doesn't appear to be moving. But you *are* being filled because God has promised to fill you (e.g. seek and you shall find (Matthew 7:7-8).

Get in the habit of regular pit stops and you will become more sensitive to your tank being filled. When you return to life, you will eventually notice a pattern of increased clarity and peace and perhaps some other things too. God will show you what to do from there.

