

Frankly Speaking: Spirituality for the Streets

Flow Now

Dear All of Us,

In more than many ways
life is like river rafting.
You never stay put.
There's this flow to it.
It takes you, ready or not,
and right now.

It takes you to the excitement,
the rush, the turbulence
and sometimes the risk
of white water rapids.
It takes you to stretches
of river rock, boulder strewn.
It takes you to
the sweeping swiftness
of fast moving currents.
It takes you to the still serenity
of calm waters.
It takes you.

River rafting is
an experiential metaphor
for all of life,
and certainly so
for our spiritual life.

The trick is to recognize
where you are
and what's going on,
deal with it,
and go with the flow.

River rafting is
an adventure for sure.
Not only do we never stay put,
but we need constant
and vigilant flexibility
to negotiate its flow.
That flexibility means responses
intense to gentle
and numerous sorts of adjustments
and calibrations in between.

So it is with life,
and ever so essentially
with our spiritual life
and its flow
right now.

Old Father Albert,
our seminary rector,
told us that
to successfully negotiate
the waters of life's flow
required:

- Faith
adhesion to God (Reality)
- Flexibility
spiritual and all sorts of
varied dexterity
- And one hell of
a sense of humor!!

That old man sure knew
how to row right,
how to flex and really
go with the flow
in its right now!!!
Speaking of flow,
the years certainly do
and now it's my turn
to be an old man.
For a while
I thought that meant
adjusting to old age
and learning
its unique spirituality.
Wrong!!!
Come to find out
we don't get old.
What we do is
get older and older
and older.

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Like all of life
and its spirituality,
old age is not a set
and settled thing.
It flows.

Decrepitude -
Dante's unbleached word for it -
is actually dynamic and progressive.
In its own way it calls for
the asceticism of
ongoing flexibility and embrace.
The specifics sure as heck
are particular to it.
I'll spare you the details -
For the old the ongoing flow
is the very same one
we all share,
whatever the immediacies
and circumstance of the moment,
whatever our age and stage of life,
whatever the flow just now.

Consider the launch.
It took us all nine months
of rapid, evolutionary flow
to go from a one celled being
to the marvelous
billions upon billions of celled being
we were on the day of birth,
that launch to a whole new span
and way of life.

Whether it's birth,
going to kindergarten,
puberty,
first job,
marriage,
mid-life and drift,
retirement,
death,
we don't stay put,
we move to more,
we are swept along in life's
FLOW NOW,

hopefully doing our best
- to be faithful to God (Reality)
- to be flexible -
spiritual and all sorts
of varied dexterities
- to have one hell of a sense of humor.

Tell you what.
Let's all get out paper and pen
get to the keyboard
and detail what those three
Faith
Flexibility
Humor
mean in our spiritual life, in its
FLOW NOW.

Let's pray and ponder
right here in that
FLOW NOW.

Let's compose a word picture
of that
FLOW NOW
and see how it reads,
what it shows and says.
It's the only place
and way we can
FLOW NOW

It's where we experience
God (Reality).
Are we adhering to God (Reality)
in our current
FLOW NOW,
whatever the turbulence or peace of it?

How are we doing with flexibility,
spiritual and all varied sorts,
given whatever we are going through in our
FLOW NOW?

Are we having one good belly laugh
at the wonder, surprise, fright,
beauty, paradox, pain, mystery
of what's going on and most of all
at ourselves, plunk in the middle
and often muddle of our FLOW NOW!

Flow Now

Spiritually and much otherwise,
we are constantly dying to what just was and
we are being born to what is just right now.
We are being born along in life's
FLOW NOW.

Do we recognize where we are,
are we dealing with it,
are we going with it,
or are we trying to stay put
in a past that isn't present,
or are we trying to cascade into
a future that just isn't right now,
or are we trying to ignore our present as is,
or are we trying to embrace
a present that sure is and as is?

The mystery in all this is that God is the
FLOW NOW.

That's where and how we meet,
mix and merge with God
right there in the flowing right now.

God is in the experience of living,
the process of it all.

God is in the flow.

God is the flow.

Our spiritual river rafting
is ongoing baptism.

We find ourselves drenched in

- ever changing experiences
of prayer and contemplation,
- new and demanding ways
of serving The Common Good,
- Lectio Divina spinning
our head and soul,
- the wonders of nature
slowing us to rapture,
- straining to carry
the emotionally crippled,
- stretches of spiritual confusion,
even disillusionment,
- a rush of ecstasy,
- the challenge of change
and adjustment,
- hitting hard up against
our own rock rough ego,
- being spun out in the turbulence
of a friend's betrayal,
- cascades of love making,
- surges of debilitating pain
as we strengthen forward,
- being swamped by systemic evil
- spans of inability
and utter dependency,
- pools of peace.

Our spiritual river rafting
speeds and frees us
until we finally flow into

The Ocean of Fullness.



John Frank, better known as Joe McCarthy, is a retired pastor celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of ordination. Joe served in the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey - parish work, high school teaching, Assistant Superintendent of Schools. He also served in The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church - pastoring four churches and teaching at Centenary University. In both, Joe did personnel, small group, and retreat work as well as spiritual direction and clergy mentoring. Joe and his wife, Suzanne, have three adult daughters. He offers a weekly blog: "frankly speaking" spirituality for the street (johnfrank-shares.blogspot.com).