

## Thinking critically about our faith

It's okay to think critically about faith issues. Constructive criticism is a process of deep thought and consideration. Very often we are told that we must believe in certain things before we can engage in issues of faith. But what if some of these things seem preposterous to us; to people of our time and place? Spiritually speaking we don't need to leave our brains at the door in order to have a full and healthy spiritual life. Doubt and the desire for critical exploration have always played a significant role in human history. Both are essential to our human journey. Doubt is the engine reason uses to approach belief. It encourages us to explore the things that don't make sense, rather than passively accept the ones that do. Doubt expands our knowledge and beliefs.

When we open our minds to exploring faith issues we begin to see that there can be many perspectives on one issue. We very often discover that someone has gone this way before and has left us rich resources to add to our understanding. We also learn that there is no single way of understanding. Even the Bible does not speak with one voice on many matters of faith. By engaging in study we broaden our range of understanding and give depth and fuel to our spiritual lives. Study will not give us neat answers. We will encounter areas of mystery and ambiguity and learn that we must risk *living the questions*.

*Living the Questions* is the very name of a series of DVDs I am presently viewing. This series explores issues of faith and understanding. In it John Dominic Crossan, a highly respected New Testament scholar explores some of the questions basic to the development of Christianity. One of questions he asks is *did Mel Gibson get the story straight in the movie The Passion of Christ?* While we may or may not agree with his analysis, the point is that he opens the door to deeper discovery and reflection on matters that have often been presented in a rigid or black and white manner.

There is a deep thirst for spiritual experience and expression in today's world. The good news is that many of our modern churches are recognizing this reality and responding. There is a new type of church developing that welcomes the deep exploration of our inner life and is eager to offer opportunities for discerning the loving, healing domain of the holy.

Rather than saying, "*come be like us*", a new voice in the church is saying, "*come, let us share our journey together.*" This stance invites people to journey and find faith rather than imposing a particular faith requirement before the journey begins.

Spiritually speaking a new way is being offered. You are invited to come as you are, to bring your gifts and to join the community seeking the mysterious face of transformation.

Warm blessing to you as you discern these new possibilities.

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