

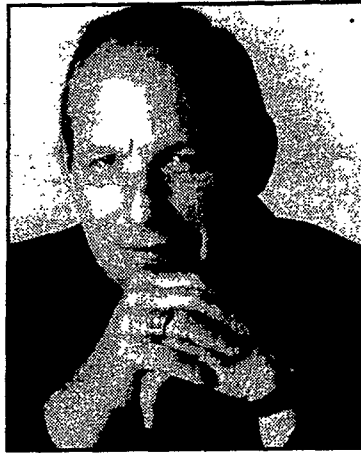
Ways to address 'internal discord'

By Bishop Matthew H. Clark

The temperature, even at this early evening hour, is still close to 90 degrees. It is just plain steamy. I usually enjoy the heat, but confess that its intensity today is more than I care for.

If I needed any confirmation of that fact, I've had it for a couple of hours this evening as I've tried without success to put together a column for this week's *Catholic Courier*. It's not that I lacked ideas; I had plenty of them. The problem has been that each time I started, I realized after a few paragraphs that my words had an edge. I wanted to write about some concerns I have, but I wasn't expressing myself in as fair and balanced a fashion as I would like. To put it more directly, I'm cranky tonight, and it was showing in inappropriate ways in what I was trying to write.

Do you ever feel that way? You just know you're just a little off-center inside and realize that, until you deal with it, it's going to affect your words and work in ways you don't want? In the past I've dug some pretty deep holes for myself before I fully realized what was happening. I can still dig such holes, but am grateful for a growing capacity to catch that kind of mood earlier. That ability may not always take me from crankiness to peace right away, but I am much less likely to take such moods out on others.



A LONG THE WAY

Over the years, if we're lucky, we learn some ways of coping with such moods. Among the approaches I've found handy are: peacefully reviewing the experiences that may have influenced my internal dispositions; alerting friends to what's happening and asking them to let me know if and when I am not acting fairly; running; thinking about my nieces and grandniece; seeking the kind of silence that helps me to settle; being near a body of water; praying for insight and for the grace to live in the love of Christ; seeking laughter in books, films or the company of friends; and, last but not least, remembering people who face much greater problems than I and do so with peaceful generosity.

Such people are heroes to me. When I remember them, I would name their loving relationship with God as the common, foundational element in their spirituality. Rooted in this relationship is their uncanny ability to keep life's realities in perspective. They see things for what they are, allowing them to become neither more nor less than that. I admire that ability. I also admire these people's openness to truth, which is so deep in them, I expect, because of their self-giving openness to the God in whom, finally, all truth is found.

Let me conclude by raising a couple of questions for your consideration:

The first: Do you sometimes experience your own equivalent of the kind of internal discord I have mentioned? If so, what do you find to be helpful in coping with it, even growing through it?

The second: Of whom do you think when I ask you to remember the individuals in your life who inspire you by their constancy and tranquility in times of trial? Do they teach you lessons you can apply to your own circumstances?

P.S. I'm going to add writing to activities which help me work through such challenging moments. I realize that I feel a lot better as I finish this than I did when I began. I'm sure it's the connection with you that did the trick. Thanks.

Peace to all.

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