

Streams of Living Water
The Incarnational Stream
October 13, 2019

Texts: Psalm 67:1-7, Luke 22:14-20, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13, Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Richard Foster speaks of the Incarnational Stream as a life that makes “present and visible the realm of the invisible spirit,” (p. 237). It expresses the desire to “experience God as truly manifest and notoriously active in daily life.” He declared that “the jagged line dividing the sacred and secular becomes very dim indeed, for we know that nothing is outside the realm of God’s purview and loving care (p. 272).”

On the one hand, this tradition presents us with concept of liturgy, which simply means “the people’s work.” We think of liturgy primarily as the “work” of corporate worship, which uses physical materials to manifest the spiritual presence of God among us. The Sacraments of the church are considered “the visible means of an invisible grace.”

On the other hand, the Incarnational Stream shows that we can bring glory to God and show the presence of God *by means of* our daily work. This was true of Bezalel, who produced the furnishings for the tabernacle. He was “filled with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and will all kinds of skills—to make artistic designs for work and gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts” (Exodus 31:3:5). God still endows people with artistic gifts today, for God’s glory.

In a reflection of the Incarnational Stream, The Faith at Work movement sought to develop a Christian spirituality of work. In the Mennonite church, MEDA encourages members to see “business as a calling” from God. Foster suggests the following traits, among others, as the “barest essentials” of such a calling:

- sense of responsibility to do something of value
- sense of freedom from the burden of workaholism
- sense of dignity in valuing people over efficiency
- sense of community which is more important than an end product
- sense of solidarity that empowers the poor
- sense of meaning and purpose in cooperating with God

At its best, the Incarnational Stream demonstrates that God meets us in the activities of everyday life, and gives deep spiritual meaning to our work. It shows that our body is a sanctuary for God which stimulates us to do God’s work in the world, even in matters such as creation care. When this stream is distorted, it may identify parts of creation as God’s own self, rather than as objects of God’s creation. It may also invite us to wrongly use objects, such as fetishes or amulets, to try to influence God or the world of spirits.

Questions to ponder:

1. Tell about a time when you sensed God’s presence or consolation as a result of someone else’s work on your behalf.
2. How do you hope to express the “incarnation” of God’s spirit in your everyday life?