

# **LIVING WITH INTEGRITY – A REQUIREMENT OF OUR FAITH**

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In recent times, there has been a lot of discussion about the lack of integrity in many areas of both private and public life. It is of special concern in areas such as politics, economics, business, journalism, the media and even in church. It is often discussed in a psychological and moral sense. There must be integrity within as well as beyond, in all areas of life. Fr. William Barry, S. J. reminds us there is no short cut to becoming a person of wisdom and integrity. It is a journey, not a destination.

## **WHAT IS INTEGRITY?**

Integrity comes from the Latin word “integer,” which means whole and entire, unbroken and consistent. It calls us to look deep within ourselves and get in touch with the Divine – the source and basis of our being and from that foundation, we allow the Divine presence and power to transform our lives and flow forth in love, compassion, justice and peace to influence all areas of our daily lives. Then we can live in harmony with our own values that are based on God’s values and that will influence all that we touch.

We live in a culture that is saturated with false gods and distractions of every kind. People are faced with a smorgasbord of choices in the media and there are few guideposts to lead people to make choices that reflect a life of integrity. The call of the Spirit within often gets drowned out by the noise, clutter and temptations of our day. We need integrity in our inner life and outer life in order to claim we are living with integrity.

## **WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF LIVING AN INTEGRATED LIFE?**

- Peace and harmony will be one of the results because our thoughts, words and actions are consistent our inner beliefs through the guidance of God’s Spirit.
- That peace and harmony will flow out into the community, family, friends and work life and influence others to do the same.
- We will have the courage to speak out boldly and challenge decisions and actions that lack integrity in any sphere of life. Often opinions and choices are based on popularity and not on truth or the common good.
- We will become courageous enough to speak the truth even at a cost to ourselves, as Jesus did and many other exemplary followers of Jesus down through the years.

- We can reduce the crisis of trust that exists in many areas of life, including in the church, in many areas of public and private life.

The call to live with integrity is a call to all of us to search our minds and hearts and examine our actions to ensure they are in alignment with God's plan for our ourselves and our world. This will not come without a cost, but it will surely pay off in the long run.

We can look around us and find some examples of lived integrity and commend those who exemplify such courage. Some have consistently spoken out courageously against war, development and use of nuclear weaponry, abuse of every kind and power and greed. Many question why we have over one billion people in our world today who are hungry in a world that has more than enough for all – enough for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed, as Dr. Martin Luther King commented.

When we practice integrity, our lives will reflect, disclose and declare our true selves as rooted in God, and we will help establish a world of truth and justice for all to see. This is an ongoing journey of growth in our spiritual life, of lifelong learning and examination of our values and how we live them in our everyday lives. We will learn by doing and become courageous in taking a stand and not cave in if opposition challenges us along the way. With the help of the divine source within, there is little that we cannot accomplish. Let us continue the journey with courage and hope.