

FAITH IS DIALOGICAL

Dr M.D. Thomas

Faith summarizes whatever is positive in life. It lays the foundation for a meaningful human life. It coordinates all the dimensions of the human life. It symbolizes the religious dimension, in special. It is the essence of all religious traditions. It is the noblest sentiment of the human heart. It is the most sublime spiritual experience, too.

Faith is a dynamic reality. It can never be static. It is always on a fluidic movement. It contains waves and bubbles, as in the sea. It keeps flowing as a rivulet or a river. It is textured by feelings and sentiments. Amidst all ups and downs, it constantly grows serene and sober as well as stronger till it reaches its final destiny.

Faith means to transcend the limits. It is going beyond the set boundaries of all dimensions of life. It is not a cage that isolates and retards the believer. No doubt, as a nest it gives homeliness and a sense of belonging to the faithful. But one has to necessarily be in a process of growing beyond it-broader, deeper and higher, in order to prove its raison centre.

Faith is oriented to the attainment of spiritual freedom. It is generally situated in an outfit of religion. Alt the same, religion is only a means to achieve this objective. Religion is never an end in itself. "The Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath". True religion regularly fosters higher faith and thus is always at the service of the humans. The diverse streams of faith in the human society are intended to be an effective means to achieve celestial heights in life.

Faith has to be lived in a liberating fashion. The horizons of the understanding of truth need to be ever widened. For this, faith traditions need to be continuously awakened. They have to be always alert. They have to be empowered to be living repositories of dynamic faith. Religious communities should be agents of facilitating the individual human beings achieve nobler experiences in life.

Faith has a biological inclination as its fundamental characteristic. It tends to extend itself towards the horizontal as well as the vertical. Its path is not linear. It longs to reach out to meet and interact with other faith traditions. While being well rooted in one's own genius, it yearns to remain networked with them. As the natural language of the spiritually elevated hearts, it remains alive in creative relationship with other faithful hearts. The relational dynamics of faith proceeds to an integration of faiths.

'Faith meets faith' is the real definition of faith. Faith is an encounter of faiths. The interplay of faiths becomes an occasion of mutual purification and enrichment of the

partners of faith. It is as if being a 'mirror' to each other. The meeting of faiths evolves into a community of faiths. In this celebration of togetherness there occurs a joint journey of faiths-to the divine and to the human simultaneously. Faith becomes thus the pivot of a culture of harmony. Harmony of faiths is the real fruit of faith. That is spiritual experience, par excellence, too.

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