Welcome to the Chaplain’s Corner newsletter. If you have a joy or concern you’d like to share with our staff, send an e-mail or give us a call at Ext. 8348. We only share concerns with the campus community, via newsletter or e-mail, with permission. You can view previous and current issues of our newsletter (in PDF format), on the Spiritual Life page of the Lynchburg College website—www.lynchburg.edu/spirituallife.

The Path to True Happiness

My oldest son, Bob, has been in Thailand for almost a year, teaching English to a classroom of middle school girls. Having never lived abroad before, he was ready to embrace the culture and take advantage of all the beauty and richness the country has to offer. What I, as his mother, didn’t realize was that this journey would take him to new spiritual realms and explorations.

I jokingly asked him the first month of his tenure had he been to Mass yet? Knowing Catholicism was not exactly rampant in Thailand, he laughed and said, “Oh yeah, Mom. I go every Sunday.” I knew this was not the case but I wondered if he would miss his Christian connection to the parish or others.

Over the course of the year Bob shared some of his experiences visiting Buddhist temples and learning to meditate. As an anthropology major, Bob has always been fascinated with learning about man and his culture. This seemed to be a natural extension of this passion. What I didn’t realize was that Bob was stretching himself by asking questions about God, his relationship with God, the world, and where he fits in. I became interested in knowing more about Thailand and Buddhism.

I’m embarrassed to admit that I knew and still know very little about Buddhism but I have tried to read about it while Bob has been there. Catholicism has always been my faith life. As a Christian, I struggle with the notion that Buddhism isn’t a religion per se, but more of a philosophy, a way of life and that there is no God. What about God? What about Jesus? To whom do we worship? For whom may I be Christ in helping? How could Bob find this new philosophy appealing?

In reading about Buddhism, I found that while Christianity is not at all like Buddhism, I could find elements that I respect and do incorporate into my life as a Christian. One website summed up Buddhism as “leading a moral life, being mindful and aware of thoughts and actions, and developing wisdom and understanding.” In my summation, Buddhism can lead individuals to a way of life that leads to true happiness. Being Buddhist depends on understanding the Noble Truths. In this way, each person decides for him or herself what is true, but rather to test the teachings for themselves by following their Noble Truths. In this way, each person decides for himself or herself what is true, but rather to test the teachings for themselves by following their Noble Truths.

I can certainly respect and live with that! Who would not want a life of true happiness based on living a moral life, seeking wisdom, understanding others and being compassionate? Bob has certainly reiterated how kind and hospitable the Thai people have been to him. Perhaps this Christian writer can learn a few things from her son and from those tenets of truth that he has come to embrace.

By Kaky Bowden
Pastoral Associate and Catholic Campus Minister

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

For a list of our regularly scheduled meetings during the academic year, go to the Spiritual Life webpage and click on “Spiritual Organizations on Campus.”

Center for Spiritual Life
500 Brevard Street
434-544-8348
www.lynchburg.edu/spirituallife

New class begins
October 2nd

A group for those who have had significant loss, death, divorce, health issues, etc. Learn to understand and cope with grief
6 sessions, held on Thursdays, 7 to 9 p.m.
First Christian Church, 3109 Rivermont Ave.
$75/person (scholarships available)
Contact: Susan Williams
434-944-8458
Website

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