

The Ruach – the winds of God

It was while I was in the military, serving as a reserve chaplain in Baden Solingen, West Germany that I started to write. I was given the opportunity of doing a morning radio spot, - a one-minute spiritual message for those Canadian service personnel and their families who lived on the economy. The jottings had to be tight, succinct and of substantive matter. The written and ultimately spoken words had to ebb and flow to the melodic strains of Peter Gynt's "sunrise" which was the theme music playing in the background. I relished the opportunity to pre-record a week or two of messages in the hope of enticing a listener to explore his or her spirituality or to perhaps discover God anew.

I found it an exhilarating challenge to see if I could convey a sense of God's presence through the "stuff" of life that was common and non-miraculous. Depending on the mood, the messages ranged from the comic to the educational, the personal to the abstract all the while emanating from my experiences, observations and reflections of the world round about.

Music was the key. If you wished me to write, you had better plug me in, shut the door and allow me to lose myself for hours undisturbed. When Dean of the Diocese of Cariboo, my secretary would walk me to my office, hand me my headphones and say you have two hours of undisturbed time to let the spirit flow...and then closed the door. It became Holy time, sacred time. During those creative bouts, where my thoughts tumbled out in a stream of consciousness, I would cry, laugh, ponder and reflect in magical ways that brought me fully alive.

Whether the writings were profound or silly, they seemed to resonate with many. I have been stopped in airports, received letters, phone calls, emails, personal visits. I have been invited to write a book and to put weekly columns in newspapers – all suggesting that we are a hungry people, seeking the in-breaking of the Holy.

In using music to trigger my vulnerable side, the range of emotions that are bottled up escape. It is there that I have discovered God patiently waiting to caress my heart. The key is to take "Sabbath Time", to experience what it is that moves your "heart of memories". Then "be still and know..."for it is there that the "ruach", the winds of God will stir your soul!

NJP @