Voices of Sisters
Horizons
Spirituality



(Unsplash/Patrick McManaman)



by Sr. Grace Marie Del Priore

View Author Profile

## Join the Conversation

October 25, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

My spirituality is marked by an ongoing effort to be balanced. I've tried to grow in healthy ways as part of a journey of self-improvement. I've found peace in being more holistic, less compartmentalized and more centered. The best image of that for me is the circle, a powerful ancient symbol in many cultures that speaks to me. It's the way I often think about my journey toward balance and wholeness.

My spiritual journey has been more of a circle than a path. As I wander and explore, move forward and regress, I don't follow a straight line. There's room in a circle to move around the edges or go inward and then back out.

Ultimately, it's a journey to the center, where God dwells. Like in a labyrinth, my meandering steps bring me closer to God, who in turn sends me back out to others.

Life in community has been a breeding ground of growth for me. I've become more humble and patient, more compassionate and caring. I like who I'm becoming! This development is like tree rings — experience builds upon experience, yielding wisdom and encompassing my past.

As I discerned my vocation, I was encouraged by this personal growth. I saw myself becoming the best version of who God was calling me to be. This still reassures me that I'm where I'm meant to be.

I used to think that balance meant focusing on one aspect of my life at a time — attending to one, then another, consecutively. I spent a lot of energy focusing on them separately and even considered the time spent on each. I saw it as a series of choices, as though there was limited room in my life. I thought if I was one thing, I couldn't be another.

For example, when I entered the novitiate, I had a narrow definition of my identity, seeing myself as an intellectual, which seemed to leave out other abilities or personal traits, like doing menial tasks or being domestic.

Later in formation, when I desired both solitude and community, I felt tension between them. They seemed to pull me in opposite directions. At times, it felt like I had to choose, yet I felt drawn to both. After some time living in community, I realized I could honor both.

There are many paradoxes in life, aspects that seem contradictory but are equally valid. I achieve balance when I can live with both, not choosing one or the other.

Disparate parts of life often overlap in harmony.

I realized it's not a choice between introverted reflection or community life — it's about finding the rhythm to have both. That rhythm involves going inside myself and then moving outward to others, a spiral motion where I find the energy and clarity to connect. My quest for balance and my appreciation for the complexities of life have helped me see how interwoven the aspects of my life are.

Advertisement

It's also clear how much of a blessing that is. I experience that most in my relationships. We're already connected through our common spiritual father, God. Seeing those connections is always powerful.

I remember an experience as a teenager in my parish youth group. We ended retreats with an affirmation activity where we identified how we saw God in each other while sitting in a circle. We shared this as we threw a ball of yarn, holding the end until it formed a web—a symbol that we were brothers and sisters in Christ. Our connection in Christ was true grace.

Balance helps me stay healthy in a complicated and sometimes dysfunctional world. People are complex and so are the relationships and situations I find myself in. I try to find beauty in the realities of being human and love people as they are. I also seek to engage in a positive, balanced way, contributing that to the situation while remaining healthy myself.

Keeping balance requires discernment. When I focus on the present, responding to where God is in the moment, I connect with others on a deeper level and recognize their needs better. Through relationships, I can be more authentic too, as the Holy Spirit guides my steps.

This helps me keep my roots in God and Gospel values, prioritizing what truly matters. My relationship with God is important to me, and I maintain it through prayer. My values and priorities make choices clearer and unify my efforts in a common direction. This gives my life purpose and meaning. For example, once I valued and committed to our life together as sisters, I naturally sought it out, and there was less tension.

This is the simplicity of a value-driven life. St. Francis' example inspires me. He was wholehearted in his love for Jesus, and it showed in how he lived. Before I became a religious sister, I was a Secular Franciscan. Part of our constitution resonated with me: St. Francis prescribes moving from Gospel to life and then from life to the Gospel, bringing wisdom to our lives and viewing life's circumstances through Scripture. It's a clear path and a direction of the heart, simple and profound.

Simplicity is like a circle — it has no beginning or end, no quadrants or corners; it's whole without fractions. It doesn't make sense to compartmentalize anymore. I feel invited to embrace all the parts of my life in a holistic way, bringing them together, united and complete.

My "judging" brain still resists this at times, but there's wisdom in living this way. I've been on a slow journey from knowledge and being in my head to being spiritually wise. When I stopped trying to sort my life into colors and patterns, as though I'm creating an ordered mandala, something natural and equally beautiful emerged. It has its own symmetry. I've gone from focusing on the parts to seeing them together.

Spiritual growth comes from God, the source of life, much like the sun. There's an abundance of beauty and goodness in the world, in nature, and in the hearts of God's children.

I want to seek out energy and inspiration through places, people and activities that light me up. I can do that through hobbies and interests and by trying new things. I can find positive aspects in the mundane or unpleasant and bring positive energy to them. There's always hope.

Seeking balance and wholeness has been a key feature of my spiritual journey. My progress has been circular, both in movement and spirit. Circle imagery reminds me of my journey and inspires me to grow in simplicity, wisdom and connection to others.