Fertile Question: What part does my gender play in constructing who I am?

Core Content Area 3: Integration and transformation

TOPIC 3.1: My gender, my spirituality

Extending Knowledge: Gender and spiritual wisdom

In this lesson students will explore issues of masculine and feminine spirituality.

Teachers: Before You Start!

1. The first activity in this lesson is predominantly aimed at boys although it is suitable for both girls and boys.

2. Obtain a copy of the DVD Into the Wild for viewing in this lesson. The movie can be viewed in parts on YouTube. View the trailer for suitability here.

For students to explore issues of masculine and feminine spirituality, select from the following activities:

1. Explore the importance of initiation for males in the development of a healthy masculine spirituality.
   a. View the YouTube clip of Fr Richard Rohr speaking about male initiation (9 mins). What does Richard Rohr suggest that adolescent boys need in order to develop a healthy sense of self? What does he say is the importance of initiation in an adolescent male’s life?
      
      When I talk about masculine spirituality, I am talking about a whole spirituality, with action coming first and reflection and making connections following. If there’s no reflection, it isn’t spirituality.
      
      Richard Rohr
      
      Into the Wild is a chronicle of a young man’s dramatic and inspiring attempt to self-initiate as well as deal with his sacred wound in ways that were both good and also tragic. It includes captivating cinematography, some lovely scenes of mentoring, the search for authenticity, and how the need to forgive and move on can come too late to share.
      
      Richard Rohr
      
      View the film Into the Wild and write personal responses to some or all of the following questions adapted from Richard.
      
      How did the movie most challenge you?
      What does Into the Wild say about men, and particularly young men?
      Does Chris (“Alexander Supertramp”) offer any kind of pattern for self-initiation?
      Is self-initiation even possible?
      How did he deal with his relationship with his father in a positive way? Negative way?
      Did he love “truth” more than relationships? Are they mutually exclusive?
      In what ways was his life an example of generosity? Of selfishness?
      At what points did you see him change and how?
      What was Chris (Alexander) seeking/needling from the older man (Ron)?
      What was the older man (Ron) seeking/needling from Chris (Alexander)?
      What was Chris’ virtue(s)?
      What was Chris’ tragic flaw(s)?
      If Chris had returned, what form, shape, and influence might his life had taken?
      How did Into the Wild impact you?
      What emotions did the movie arise for you – during it? Immediately afterwards? Later?
      What form does your life take in its search for “Into the Wild”?
      
      i Share only those answers you wish to share with a partner or the class.

2. Explore the elements of a healthy feminine spirituality.
   a. Access the article Is there a specifically feminine spirituality?
      
      Analyse and critique the suggested positive qualities of strong women. Discuss with a partner the degree to which you agree or disagree with the qualities.

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