

## Pastor's Letter

I was born under the sign of Taurus, not Aquarius. But you wouldn't know it from the stuff I'm reading lately. From Matthew's (very) short story of Jesus' baptism to Jacques Yves Cousteau's Silent World to Jules Verne's 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, I'm hip deep in the world of water. I'd probably do well to curl up in my favorite reading chair with a cup of tea, a life-jacket and a towel!

I suppose we all have occasional "flights of fancy" or "dives of dalliance", and I, for one, find it hard to fathom how our spirits are led into such realms. I once heard that night-time dream imagery involving water is often symbolic of God or the holy. It's an attractive thought. Perhaps my seemingly "random" sampling of literature reflects a desire to go deeper in my relationship with God.

Recently, the Shalem Institute published its annual magazine entitled "Deep and Wide", featuring lavish ocean-scape photography and more than one essay in which water figured prominently. As I perused the issue, two numbers floated into my consciousness from some otherwise long-forgotten science course: 98 and 70. Our bodies consist of 98% water, and the Earth's surface is 70% water. Dry land really is in the minority, which in some strange way vindicates that old high school P.E. requirement that students learn to swim. Seen on a planetary scale, getting well acquainted with water is rather like learning French before heading to Paris. Water is the predominant culture on Earth.

Water is often very beautiful, as evidenced by a host of artists from Ansel Adams to Claude Monet. But water also has its darker side – literally. One aspect of water that challenged even the great Jacques Cousteau was its opacity. Generally speaking, one just can't see very far underwater, even with high-powered illumination. By contrast, on land the human eye can spy a single candle from 30 miles away.

Water, then, may capture one essential quality of spiritual living: as we find ourselves immersed in a domain vastly larger than ourselves, we peer into deep mysteries with extremely limited vision - or as St. Paul put it, "through a glass darkly."

In the life of the Spirit, it's easy to feel that we're "in over our head", which may be one reason why spirituality rarely comes up in casual conversation. Try floating this "conversation-starter" at your next coffee klatch: "What are your thoughts about the concepts of infinite divinity, unconditional love, and eternal life?" Chances are your friends will just clear their throats and pass you a cup of coffee...or...the name of a good therapist.

A part of what makes a community of faith so precious... and so quirky...is that we open ourselves to precisely those sorts of conversations. We hold our noses, close our eyes and take the plunge into deep places where we can't see - precisely because they are places of such abundant life.

Just as the oceans hold most of the life on planet Earth, the spiritual "abyss" is rife with free-floating blessings like deeper self-understanding, deeper compassion and deeper peace...if we jump in.

Don your nose-plugs if necessary but, by all means, jump in! The water's wonderful!

Tim