

THEME FOR 2009

Spiritual Values in a World Culture

While the current dialogue about political and economic priorities is important, the implementation of policy therapies will require considerable strengthening of the human values and ethical duties that unite us. Inspired by Aim 5 of the Declaration of Interdependence, the Institute of World Culture's Board of Trustees has chosen *Expressions of Spiritual Striving* as its guiding theme for the 2009 program.

How might we understand the nature of humanity's spiritual striving? To strive is to seek knowledge, improvement and fulfillment of potential. Does not this capacity for growth assume that there is a hidden potential in living creatures that we sense but do not know? Self-discovery is an integral part of spiritual striving. Is not this potential discovered within ourselves also shared by all that lives? Is not a recognition of human commonality an inevitable discovery emerging from our own halting efforts to truly know ourselves? As we strive to know ourselves and thereby others with both intellectual and existential methods, will we discover a larger sense of what is real and true and good and beautiful? A larger, more universal, persisting and sacred reality is what the artists and philosophers, the mystics and creators of literature, the spiritual teachers and ethical leaders point to. Do we not read their writings and study their art with the hope we will learn what they have discovered? Do they not give us philosophical definitions and existential reports on what is spiritual? Do they not entice us into a discovery that we are part of a deeply felt human community as well as a magnificent natural world? Then, also, do they not teach us the tough lessons of self-restraint and mutual responsibilities? Thus, the search for a spiritual identity becomes a pathway, self-consciously chosen, to non-violent and ethical participation in a world-wide, human community. The artists and philosophers give us the tools to make this journey of discovery and engagement. They inspire us and unlock our creative imagination, guiding us to become capable of fostering human fellowship among

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all races, nations and cultures. Rich indeed is the variety of ideals and goals expressed in the religions, philosophies and literatures central to the cultural heritage of humanity.

To pursue answers to these questions and deepen our understanding of how human community can be nourished in a turbulent era will be the aim of the programs at the Institute of World Culture during 2009. We welcome your participation and wish to thank all who have given so much support in so many ways to the Institute. Your contributions in time, money and participation are essential to the life and future of this volunteer association.

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