

## Integrating the 'Forgotten Dimension' of Care into Health Care Practices – an Orthodox' view of nurturing spirituality

In an era in which the free expression of spiritual and religious life is being restricted in public, in which nations and peoples are in a crisis of identity and human relations are disturbed, it is not at all coincidental that a great interest is being shown in what is termed as “spirituality”.

But what is meant by spirituality? It is obvious that, nowadays, the popular term “spirituality” is not identical to classical religious expression. One sign of this is a decline of "religion" in many countries of the world, and the limited influence of religion in many structures of society, such as charitable institutions and health care policies.

Today, the concept of “spirituality” is synonymous with anthropocentrism. It describes the means to achieve a harmonious life - a well-being - based on materialistic values. At the same time, nowadays, spirituality often acquires a dangerous fundamentalist character that hinders the mature psychosomatic development of Man.

Orthodoxy can be identified neither with a cosmic spirituality nor with a fundamentalist view of things. It focuses on a spiritual life, where Man becomes a shareholder of God's love.

There is no doubt that the spiritual life of Christian contributes both to human health and to the way Christian deals with his difficulties. The epicentre of Orthodox spiritual life is based on the concept of *prosopon* - the ability of Man to love God and his fellow man freely. This fact requires humility and compassion. When one loses this dimension of oneself, one also loses one's existential being. This loss is a major cause of illness.

The healing of Man involves the restoration of this existential being to its original state of personhood. In other words, one cannot be healed if one does not experience love, especially the love of God, and this healing cannot be separated from the Church - that is, without the reintegration of Man into the communion/community of persons.

Rev. Dr. Stravos Kofinas  
Coordinator of the Network of the Ecumenical Patriarchate  
for Pastoral Health Care