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Spirituality, like religion, involves a discussion of faith

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Last week, NPR aired a series [1] on youth and religion. The general point was that participants in the group discussion did not identify with established religion, though some of them prayed. A week earlier, NPR reported [2] a mom in San Diego who pulled her child from a fourth-grade yoga class on the grounds that the school was teaching religion -- in this case, Hinduism.

I was interested in all the comments, but I was surprised at the confusion between religion and spirituality in both reports. There was no discussion of faith. The group discussion didn't address whether participants believe in God. The yoga class didn't seem to even mention the names of Hindu gods, much less teach belief in them. The objection was to bowing to the sun and thanking the sun for giving life prior to the yoga "sun salute."

This omission of the presence of God made discussion of prayer odd. It had more of an element of superstition, or perhaps of feeling desperate, than of adoration, contrition, thanksgiving and supplication (ACTS, the mnemonic I learned in third grade). Somebody said once you can recognize a Catholic by asking a question, any question, about religion. We will look off into a corner, trying to remember what the Baltimore Catechism said.

Granted, Catholics can fixate on religion. Still, religion is a sound base for spirituality. But it's not the only base. We are made of spirit and matter, and to bow to the sun or send darts of supplication into the universe recognizes and honors our spirits, our souls, and it recognizes our longing for the divine. Think of religion, ethics and human love all as launching pads into the spiritual life.

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[1] http://www.npr.org/sections/religion/
[2] http://www.npr.org/search/index.php?searchinput=yoga+hindu+religion+san+diego