

Spirituality in the workplace?

Tim J. McGuire is a baseball fan, but that wasn't why he kept a framed Mickey Lolich card on his desk when he was the editor of the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*.

That baseball card was a gift from a man who applied for one of the newsroom's top jobs and, here is the twist, did not get it.

"But he wrote me a beautiful letter and he remembered that Mickey Lolich was one of my favorite players," said McGuire. "Sending me that card was such a beautiful, gracious thing for him to do.

"For me that isn't just a baseball card. It's a sacred object."

Blending Faith and Work

McGuire mixes work and spirituality all the time, even though he knows many people think this is heresy. Still the former editor is convinced that journalists and other stressed-out professionals must find some way to stop ignoring the holes in their souls.

That's one reason the 53-year-old parachuted out of his newsroom last summer, weeks after finishing his term as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. He wanted to be able to speak his mind even more freely than he did during his years as a journalistic gadfly known for his brash management style and profane wise-cracks.

Instead of retiring, he began writing a syndicated column called "More Than Work," dedicated to values and faith in the workplace.

Work is the last place most people

think about spirituality, said McGuire, speaking during a seminar on "Faith, Religion & Values" at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies. Instead of being the place where they express the values that are most precious to them, work becomes the place where these values are irrelevant.

"Work is brutal. Work is a four-letter word," said McGuire. "Most people don't think that work could possibly have anything to do with spirituality . . . They assume that these two worlds cannot mesh. But if we bring our souls to work, then we can transform our work. That is when our work can begin to transform us.

"The problem for most people is that their work transforms them into something bad, something bitter and tired and broken."

McGuire saw this happen day after

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day, but he doesn't think journalists are more "soul sick" than other people. All kinds of people struggle to find ways to cope with pain, confusion, and anger. Some purchase mountains of possessions and others keep trading in one romantic relationship for another. Some turn to drugs and alcohol. Some literally worship their work, even though they may hate the work they do.

This struggle is spiritual, whether people want to admit it or not. Finding a way to sleep at night is a spiritual process.

Caring for the Soul

"Everybody has to have a spirituality and everybody does have one," said McGuire. "What we do with that personal madness that makes us who we are is our spirituality . . . Spirituality is about how we try to fill that hole in our souls."

Welcoming spirituality into the workplace doesn't mean holding revival meetings and letting people speak in tongues at their desks, he said. The key is to make personal changes and vows that help "bring Sunday on over into Monday," he said.

That's why McGuire treasured that Mickey Lolich baseball card. That's why he uses computer passwords such as "blessed" that make him stop and think. A glass eagle sculpture on his desk is a reminder to treat his staff like eagles, not chickens.

Believers can find ways to seek holiness without being "holier than thou," he said. Take office gossip, for example.

"What are you supposed to do about that? You should not participate in the sin. You have to walk away," he said. "So far, so good. But what you can't do is point at those people and say, 'You're sinning! You're sinning! You've got to stop gossiping!' . . .

"No, the way you cut down on the gossiping is that you stop gossiping yourself. But that's the hard part anyway, isn't it?" ■

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