

## SPIRIT: THE SOUL IN ACTION

There is an old Spanish Maxim which says:  
 “He that loseth wealth loseth much;  
 He that loseth friends loseth more;  
 He that loseth his spirit loseth all.”

In other words, the man who loses his spirit loses the very essence of his being – he loses the vital principle which gives him life and vigor and sensitivity.

The spirit within us is an abstract quality with several descriptive definitions; it is a “lively quality in a person; it is a special attitude or frame of mind; it is the activating principle influencing a person.” In simple definitive language, it is what we are, what we do, what we say and what we think.

Its primary synonym is “soul” which is defined as “one’s total self – a moving spirit.” So we may conclude that spirit is the soul in action. It is the quality within us that motivates us to rise above the chap and tawdry in life; it is mental vigor; it is our innate intelligence; it prescribes how we react to the blessings and adversities of life.

Another synonym is “courage” – how badly we need it and how often we fail to choose it – but it does not go away – it is always waiting to be chosen. Hugh Walpole once said, “It isn’t life that counts, it is the courage that we bring to it.”

There is spirit in the soul of each one of us – waiting to be nurtured and put into action. We can see it all around us – like the person whose inherent personality brings a new dimension into the room when he enters. We see it in a man who has accepted responsibility and who speaks with assurance and walks with vigor with his head held high. It is evident in a woman who makes a commitment and sees it through regardless of the sacrifices involved. It is there in a little girl whose eyes deprive her of good vision yet she has fought her way to the top of the class both socially and academically. She sought and found courage. We see souls in action in all of the little people everywhere who do little things for unimportant people under unusual circumstances –such as taking a kettle of soup to a sick friend or a telephone call to a shut-in or a trip to the grocery for an elderly friend. The strength of one’s spirit is the exact measurement of one’s soul. To be devoid of spirit is to become a victim of a disease that destroys character, paralyzes progress, demolishes personality and forbids happiness.

Kalil Gibran once wrote. “The spirit in every being is made manifest in the eyes, the countenance, in every body gesture and movement. Our appearance, our words, our actions are never greater than ourselves. For the soul is a man’s house; the eyes its windows and his words its messengers.”

But how is P.E.O. involved in all of this? Simply this – any organization is no stronger than the sum of the strength of its members. Surely we must agree that P.E.O.’s have

had spirit in abundance ever since 1869 when seven girls decided to organize their own “club.” Then on throughout the years to the day a college was offered to a struggling but dedicated organization. It took courage to accept it and much spirit to maintain it. Then more years passed until today – now we have our five million dollar Educational Fund; our hundreds of I.P.S. girls; our Continuing Education Program and our ten million dollar Cottey College Golden Anniversary Fund. All these projects and more are the fruits of our collective spirit put together by thousands of women who had the courage to dream and the spirit to make those dreams come true.

Our accomplishments are many, but P.E.O. has meant something personal to each of us. It has planted something in each of our hearts that was not there before. Is there a P.E.O. spirit for each one? Let it speak for itself –

“I am the Spirit of P.E.O. I am an elusive, intangible quality but I am found in the heart of each one of you.

I came into being many years ago when seven girls believed so completely in me that they fashioned a star to wear as an emblem of their devotion to me. I am reborn each time an initiate takes my vows. Thousands of women have dedicated themselves to the task of preserving and developing me so that you and others like you might have the privilege of wearing my emblem and repeating my vows.

I am a vital force in the life of each one of you but if I were to ask you what I stand for, I would, I am sure, have many different answers. To some I mean friendships, warm and sincere, to others I am understanding. To one I would mean high ideals and to another, inspiration. To one who has worn my emblem for many years, I am, perhaps, a loving relationship; and to a new member I might be the sharing of joys and sorrows alike. I am precious to many of you because I demand the best from each one of you; I am Christian principles applied to everyday living. To some I have given confidence, to others ambition; I am a philosophy to be shared and a goal to work toward.

So perhaps I should not say that I am an indefinable quality for each one of you defines me and evaluates me and fashions a niche for me in your heart, and the depth of that niche depends upon the size of your heart. There I shall stay forever and ever. I shall not die; I shall live on and on as long as women like you believe in Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth.

I am the Spirit of P.E.O.”

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