

AWARENESS OF LIVING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

We live in God's presence at all times. There is no way to avoid it, because God is everywhere, in all things and at all times. However, it *our awareness* of this divine presence that makes the difference in our faith - our relationship with the Holy One.

Parenthetically it means we cannot hide. We cannot escape God's vision. Our misguided thoughts and actions are always on stage, front and center, in full view. We are totally exposed at all times. However, we should not dwell on the negative because it is not productive.

The positive side of God's omnipresence promised forever is: God has our backs. We are never alone. God is constantly and forever present in our lives and in our world. This fact is worthy of our acknowledgement and celebration.

Furthermore, God's presence is a gift to be shared. We share it by being present, in whatever way is needed at the moment, to those around us. Sharing it is every bit as important as experiencing it ourselves. To do so is to be positively engaged with those who need us, as God is positively engaged with us. The irony is: Our caring engagement with others becomes God's caring engagement with them.

The Holy One's constant engagement with us awakens our awareness and evokes our gratitude. It is a powerful process feeding upon itself.

While our awareness of God's presence is a critical factor in this spiritual phenomenon, it can be fleeting. It can fade and often does in the throes of life's challenges. Maintaining our awareness requires our careful attention and renewal. It is strictly a maintenance operation - trying over and over again to remain aware.

We need regularly to draw ourselves up short and require ourselves to refocus on the incredible fact of God's constant presence in our lives and in our world. There are, of course, traumatic events along the way which jerk us around, but even they reveal how God uses tragedy - illness, deaths and accidents - to reiterate the reality of divine presence and promise to be with us in every situation, including the dark ones.

What does God's presence entail? What difference does it make? First of all, it insinuates God's power into our lives, and our life situations, which power is released to benefit us. This accounts for the miracles that may occur in our behalf - many of which may go unnoticed. Other miracles may be so obvious they all but slap us in the face. Miracles do abound because of God's presence in our lives, and in our world, offering us healing (body, mind and soul), inspiration and protection.

A miracle may be defined as a temporary interruption of the natural order to produce a different and better outcome. It is divine intervention into God's own created order for our benefit. In so doing God interrupts the natural flow of things, and changes direction, thereby altering the outcome. It is an amazing and unimaginable phenomenon.

Obviously, God's presence is not static but active. God does not merely observe, but becomes thoroughly entangled in our lives, unpacking the backpack of emergency items to take care of us - minute by minute.

A fascinating dimension of this encounter with God is experiencing the multifaceted nature of the Holy One. How do we perceive God to be: a personality - a higher power - an old man with a white beard floating on a cloud? The truth of the matter is we cannot even envision God's true nature. It eludes us, thus remaining a huge mystery. The nature of God is beyond comprehension. We can sense the majestic presence, but we are incapable of perceiving the form of the divine.

This, of course, is as it should be. Anything we can imagine lies within the range of our ability to manage, maneuver or manipulate it. God does not fit into this category. The nature of the divine lies outside our ability to comprehend, control or categorize. Rather, God's apparent intent is for us to experience, interact and participate in this mysterious relationship. It is enough for us to experience God's presence and become aware of it. It is designed to be a spiritual experience not a mental one.

It is all about God - not us. We have trouble with that concept because of our hubris. We persistently prioritize *who we are* over *whose we are*. We are God's people. Furthermore, we would be much farther ahead if we would refrain from trying to make God in our image and celebrate the fact we are created in God's image as spiritual beings who are specially gifted with bodies and minds. We need to let our spirits function, enabling us to be aware of living in God's presence at all times.