

topics included in this series

1. The Inborn Hunger for God
2. God Reveals a Loving Plan
3. The Church Passes on Divine Revelation
4. Scripture Is the Word of God
5. The Response to Revelation Is Faith
6. The One True God
7. God Is One in Three
8. God, the Creator
9. God Creates Everything Seen & Unseen
10. The Reality of Sin and Grace
11. You Are the Messiah!
12. Mary: Mother of God and Mother of the Church
13. The Reign of God
14. The Passion of Christ
15. The Resurrection and the Ascension
16. The Holy Spirit
17. The Mystery of the Church
18. One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic
19. Christ's Faithful: The People of the Church
20. Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell
21. Liturgy Is the Work of the Trinity
22. The People, Places, and Actions of the Liturgy
23. Baptism
24. Confirmation
25. Eucharist
26. Penance and Reconciliation
27. Anointing of the Sick
28. Holy Orders
29. Matrimony
30. We Are Destined for God
31. Morality and Conscience
32. Faith, Hope, and Love
33. Missing the Mark
34. Society and Human Dignity
35. Grace and Merit
36. The Magisterium and the Ten Commandments
37. No Strange Gods: The 1st & 2nd Commandments
38. Keeping Holy: The 3rd Commandment
39. Honoring our Parents: The 4th Commandment
40. On the Taking of Life: The 5th Commandment
41. Called to Chastity: The 6th & 9th Commandments
42. Generosity: The 7th and 10th Commandments
43. Truth: The 8th Commandment
44. Called to an Encounter with God
45. Forms of Prayer
46. The Wellsprings of Prayer
47. Ways to Pray & Obstacles to Prayer
48. Praying As Jesus Taught

GROWING
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PROJECT

about the art



"The desire for God is written in the human heart, because [we are] created by God and for God," Catechism #27.



"All creatures bear a certain resemblance to God, most especially [humans], created in the image and likeness of God," Catechism #41.



"In defending the ability of human reason to know God, the Church is expressing her confidence in the possibility of speaking about [God] to all..." Catechism #39.

GROWING
FAITH
PROJECT

1

The inborn hunger for God

what does
your heart
desire?

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Reflections based on articles 26–49 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

The inborn hunger

The human heart is filled with hunger.
No matter who we are or where we live,
no matter how rich or poor we've become,
no matter to whom we're married,
or not married at all,
no matter what,
we hunger.

And for what is it that we humans hunger?
When we pause to consider this,
in all its magnitude and power,
we realize that we hunger for that One who made us.
We hunger for the divine heart.
We hunger for God.

This desire for God is written into our very hearts,
because we are created by God and for God
and God never ceases to draw us to himself.

reflection

When you think about your own life,
how do you sense that you are on a
"journey of faith?"

Only in God will we ever find the truth and happiness
for which we never stop searching.

Our dignity as humans rests above all on the fact
that we are called to this "communion" with God.
This invitation to be near to God
to talk with God
to hear God's voice echo in our own souls,
is addressed to us from the first moment of being.

The truth is that we believe something very profound
about human life.
We believe that we exist
because God has created us.

And God's creation, above and beyond everything else,
is an expression of God's love for us and the world.
Likewise, only through God's love do we continue in being.

For us humans, we believe,
it is necessary that we acknowledge God,
acknowledge God's love
and give our very hearts over to God,
in order for us to achieve happiness
and fullness of life.

But how does this desire to be near to God
play out in everyday life?
How do we know that it is, in fact, a desire for God
and not for something or someone else?

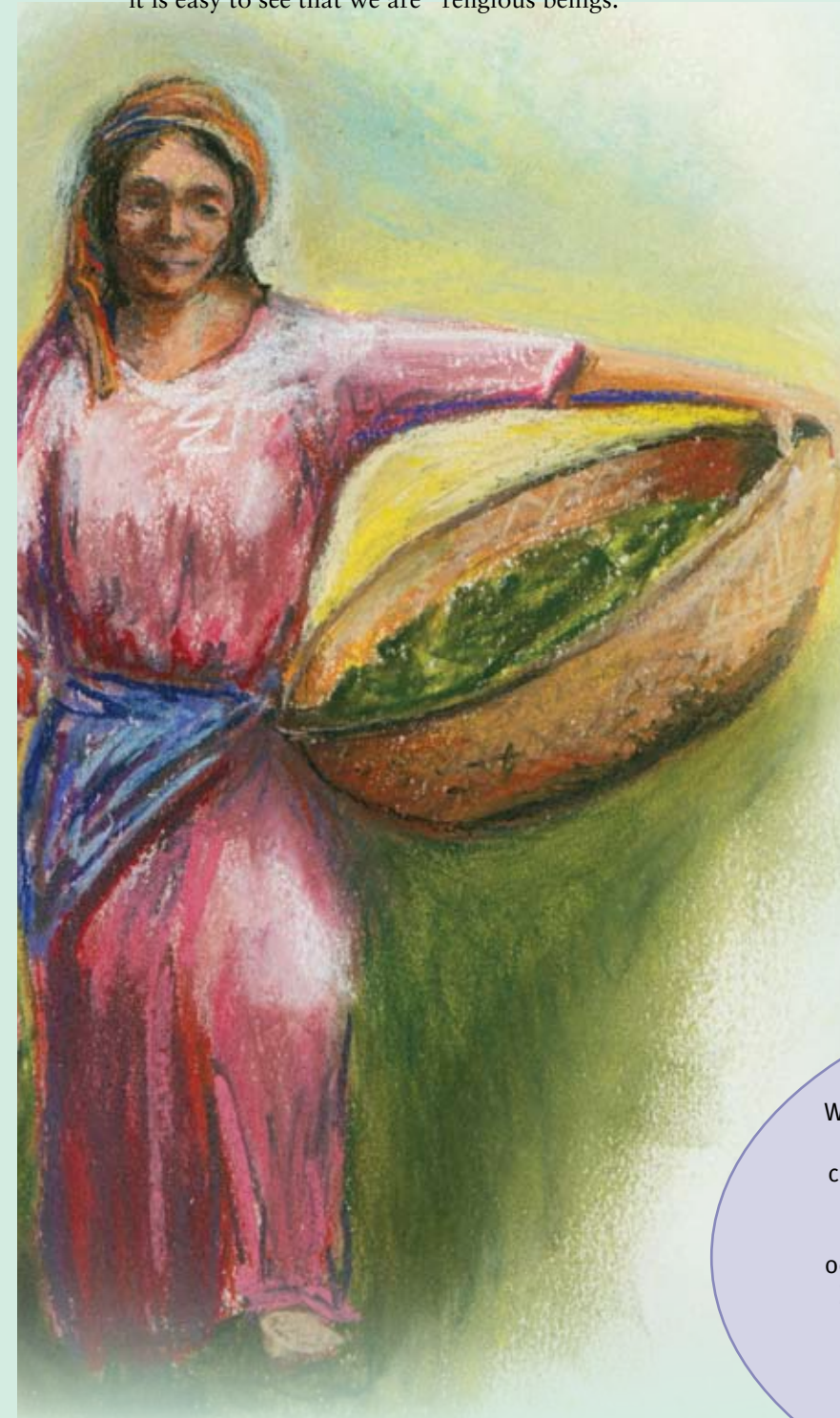
In many ways,
throughout history down to the present day,
people have expressed their innermost desires
in words and actions.
We have continually sought quiet moments of prayer.
We have engaged in various forms of sacrifice.
We have developed rituals and liturgies.
We have found, in short,
ways to express our inner being
by reaching beyond ourselves to "another being."

Only in God
will we ever find...
happiness.

We give that "other being" a name
and that name is Holy One,
Spirit Counselor,
Wonder of Wonders
Father of All
Great Spirit
or, in a word, God.
Looking even casually at history
and how we humans have behaved
it is easy to see that we are "religious beings."

We
humans are...
religious beings
by nature.

And even though we have
searched continually for God
down through the centuries
and even in our present day,
God, it turns out, is really quite near to us.
For in God, as Acts of the Apostles reminds us
in chapter 17, verse 28,
"we live and move and have our being."



exercise

What are the signs and markers along the route of your
journey of faith that show you the way? Create a life
chart in decades, beginning with your birth and ending
with the present situation of your life. On the chart,
show the turning points and major shifts which have
occurred down through your years. You might use sym-
bols such as +, -, !, * to indicate positive and negative
aspects of the journey.

We sometimes forget

God is love: "Divine Love,"
and in Christ that love is revealed.

Christ gives us the Spirit of Love,
and in this One God,
these three Loving Persons
form a perfect Trinity.

God who is Divine Love is very near to us
and we to Divine Love.

It is as close as a breath,
a smile,
a turn of the head.

And yet...

...we sometimes forget,
or focus on the riches of this world,
or allow indifference to overtake us,
or remain in ignorance about our deep desires,
or follow bad example through sin,
or ignore God's invitation
or even outrightly reject God
or—and this is perhaps the most insidious –
hide from God in fear and shame.

We can be
certain of
God's
existence.

God however, does not abandon us,
or reject us,

or shift the divine focus of attention.

God is always calling us to seek the divine heart,
to find life and happiness.

And on our part, our human part,
what is required of us?

Simply that we open our hearts to God,
that we allow ourselves to be loved,
that we place ourselves in such a place
that we can hear the voice of the Holy One
which never ceases echoing in our depths.

And for those who do seek God
with a pure heart and deep desire,
there are certain ways of coming to know
the Divine Source of Life.

There are ways of approaching God,
of coming to see God,
which make us rather certain of God's existence.

We can't prove that God is there,
in the same way we prove something in science.

But we can see with the inner eye,
hear with the inner ear,
and touch God in our own hearts.

And in this, we can be certain: God is.

reflection

In Genesis, we read that we are made in the image of God. What does that mean for you? How do you see God in humans and how do humans reveal God to you?

We are made
to live in
communion
with God.

We see the world

First, we can see the world.

From the first glimmer of life,
there was shining opulence in the midst of the chaos
that surrounded the earth.

And as the Spirit hovered over that chaos,
lo! order emerged, holy order.

However that first hundred thousand,
or hundred million years of earth's history unfolded,
in all of it, we believe, the hand of God was present.

St. Paul wrote of this in his letter to the Romans
where he said, in chapter 1, verses 19-20,

"What can be known about God is plain to them,
because God has shown it to them.

Ever since the creation of the world

God's invisible nature,
namely, eternal divine power,
has been clearly perceived
in the things that have been made."

And St. Augustine observes in one of his sermons
that the beauty of the earth itself
is a profession of faith.

reflection

If possible, take a walk in a park or
near a lake or pond and reflect on
how you see the hand of God in all of
creation. Share this experience with others.



We see ourselves

Second, we know ourselves as human persons.
We are open to truth and we see beauty.
We have an inner sense of moral goodness.
We experience human freedom
and recognize the voice of our consciences.

We long for the infinite, for the divine,
and we question ourselves and each other
about the nature of God.

In all of this, we can see that we have an inner spirit,
what is traditionally called a soul,
that there is some element of human existence
which draws us beyond ourselves,
to our Maker.

As the document on the church in the modern world
from Vatican II puts it in article 18,
we bear in ourselves “the seed of eternity.”

Indeed, that seed is planted by God’s own hand.

When we pause to let this seed of eternity grow,
we find a certain knowledge of things divine.

We know we did not bring ourselves into being,
nor will we determine our final resting place.

But even though there is that inner sense of the divine,
and even though we are capable of knowing
that God is present,
we can only grow into divine intimacy
by responding to God’s
invitation to this gift.

By seeing
creation,
we see God.
By hearing
what is
within nature,
we hear God.

The church teaches

Indeed, the church teaches what we have just observed,
namely that God can be known
because of the created world
and by the light of human reason.

We humans are capable of knowing God, therefore,
because we are created in the divine image.

Even though we ourselves place obstacles
in our own path to God,
God shows us the way,
provides us with signs and markers,
and never leaves us.

In order for us to follow these signs,
and understand these markers,
we must keep our eyes focused,
we must not allow other desires
to overtake this one,
we must surrender ourselves to God.

We are capable of believing only what we want to be true,
rather than what is really true,
and revealed to us by God.

This capability, this inner ability to turn away from God,
even though God is Maker and Lover of us all,
seems to reside in every human person.

We are in need of God’s on-going revelation,
God’s sure hand to guide us.

How can we truly speak about God?

The church believes it is possible for us humans,
of every religion and academic discipline,
to speak with and about God.
But our language is mere human language
so we look to what God has created to help us.
There we find that all creation is a mirror of God,
in a way, it reflects God’s love and presence.
This is especially true of us humans.
But even under this method of speaking,
our human language is insufficient,
and poor.

For God is mystery,
not a mystery of misunderstanding or darkness,
but a mystery of depth
and we will never entirely probe the depths of God.



reflection

How did Vatican II help the church prepare to guide people in today’s modern world? In your own journey of faith, how does the church help you? How does your household or your community of faith help?