

God Is Light and Love

When we are born into this world, we "forget" where we have come from. The reason is so that faith will play her role. The early Church Father Origen as well as Eastern spiritual masters talk about life in this world as a "forgetting."

Upon a near-death experience, or, on the day we die, you will be known as you are known. In the Bible, it shows us, that Jesus, through his prayers, and, the revelations God gave him, that he had broken through and remembered where he had come from. He taught, "I know where I have come from and where I am going." (John 8:14). At the Last Supper, Jesus knew that he had come from God and was going to God. (John 13:3). Whether we remember or not, we have all come from God and we will all one day return to God. God loans us our souls for a little while to see what type of life we will lead. We must justify our souls now because all of a sudden the long journey of life will end. Then we will view the deeds of our time of "forgetting" on earth, through the lens of our remembering where we came from. There will be great shame for those who have not proved worthy of their soul, as well as great joy for those who lived in faith.

God

One day every person who has ever lived will stand before God. This encounter is glorious and electric. You may not be able to see a form, but what you will see is light. It is as though you were looking at the sun with eyes closed, but this light is even brighter. It is a pure, luminescent light. Psalm 104:1–2, tells us the truth that "God is clothed with honor and majesty, and covers himself with light as with a garment." You just do not see the light, but the light also embraces you. The light is alive.

In addition to the brightness, there is an overwhelming glory. God's glory is a common theme in the Bible. David prayed seeking God and remembered how he had seen God's power and glory in the sanctuary. (Psalm 63:1–2). God is the King of glory (Psalm 24:8, 10). The word glory in Hebrew has the meaning of honor, adornment, beauty and majesty. Glory is an attribute of God's magnificence because of who he is and what he has done. The prophet Ezekiel tried to describe his vision of God's glory. "Like the appearance of the rainbow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about the throne. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." (Ezekiel 1:28). This same rainbow is spoken of in the majestic Chapter 4 of the book of Revelation. "And he who sat upon the throne appeared like Jasper and Carnelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald." (Revelation 4:3).

In heaven, God's glory is not just something you observe. It is an electricity and ecstasy that you can feel. It is a rhythmic powerful search that runs through your whole being. You might even be able to see it. With light as the background, you may also be able to see horizontal lines consistently and constantly running upwards through you. Probably the best example to describe this is when the television set is not adjusted correctly and the dark horizontal lines run upwards constantly. Or you may think of the waves that flow through a large US flag when it is windy. We call our flag "old glory."

This is a description of the beatific vision. God is immensely glorious and the waves of glory are constant and breathtaking. You experience pure bliss and ecstasy. Pleasure runs through your entire being. You still have the sense of having the form of your body. This teaches us that our soul/spirit has the shape/form of our present body. The glory you experience is as if you are in your present/size/form. Until we are reunited with our resurrected body at the end of time we will have an awareness of our form in God's presence. 1

Standing before the throne of God you experience the pleasure all humans seek in their lives, the joy for which we were made. God's presence is the ultimate pleasure for which we long. In a near-death experience, the beatific vision is just a taste for which we are all heading. "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison." (2 Corinthians 4:17). God's honor becomes our honor. God shares his honor and dignity with us. You receive it as a child of God. After having such an experience of this pleasure in a near-death episode, you realize why you are not happy on earth. Our hearts are made for God not for the facsimiles earth offers. The Lord is our shepherd and we shall not want! The triumphant victory and honor given Jesus because of the Cross is generously shared with us.

Actually, God wants to share his glory with everyone. He has an inexhaustible supply for all. Psalm 8:5 tells us that God has already crowned humans with glory and honor. Romans 8:29–30, reveals that God has predestined, that is, called and justified us so that we can share in his glory. In a near-death experience you encounter that glory daily through the person and presence of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you. This glory is of a lesser degree on earth, but nevertheless exhilarates you.

One of the greatest delights of heaven will be that we will experience waves of God's glory forever. The prophet Isaiah tells us in 43:7 that we were created for God's glory! God wants us to be enraptured by his presence. God's being is the glory of love. He wants us to delight in the honor, majesty and victory that was won at Calvary. Not only that, we will be enrapt in our attention of God as we worship. Finally, we will appreciate and know that we have been saved and redeemed by the Lamb. Isaiah gives us a glimpse of heaven when he writes, "On that day we will say, 'This is our God for whom we have waited. Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.'" (Isaiah 25:9). Try to imagine appreciating life as was meant to be!

The word ecstasy literally means to "be beside oneself." In a near-death experience, as you stand before God and embraced by light, clothed in glory, and reveling in the blessed, you may notice that you are unable to think the way you usually do. On earth we can choose to think certain thoughts, but in God's presence, you are so full of God and his peace that it seems like you lose the ability to choose your own thoughts, because you are possessed by God.

We are all plagued by fear, anxiety and worry. Such thoughts will not occur in God's presence. The writer of the letter to the Ephesians prayed a beautiful prayer, hoping that we would know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge and "be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:19). Even now to a lesser degree, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit or allow ourselves to be filled with the fullness of God, we allow God to take control of our minds, decisions and emotions.

Do not fear being possessed by God. In this world, being human involves many negative thoughts such as fears, anxieties, bad memories, regrets, stress, sins, etc. The battlefield with the devil is our minds. Many deal with depression, despair, loneliness and panic. We won't be able to think of such things anymore. Instead, we will be "beside ourselves" and be renewed in our minds. We will think God's thoughts and know his ways. We will be totally his. We will still be a distinct soul and our own unique self, but very Godlike. Jesus said that in the afterlife, we would be like angels of God. (Matthew 22:30). Our faces will shine like the sun in our Father's kingdom. (Matthew 13:43). Heaven will be life the way it was meant to be. We will be joyful, peaceful, and crowned with delight and honor. We were made for honor. We were made for glory. God will complete and fulfill us.

We Shall Know As We Are Known (1 Corinthians 13:12)

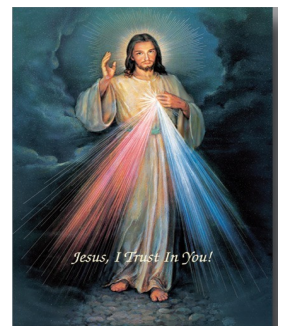
If you are an inquisitive or philosophical person, and a student of human events concerning the sufferings people are enduring, you realize that our world is in a mess. Even though you may be a person of faith you question, "How can a good God allow these human events to occur? Why doesn't God step in to correct the injustices in the world?" Theologically, this questioning is called "The Problem of Evil."

When you stand before the presence of God, at our death or near-death experience, all your questioning melts away. If you had a near-death experience you come to realize the truth, that is, "you know even as you are known!" All of the tragedies, sufferings and unanswered questions melt away in the presence of our Glorious God. Somehow in God's timing and way, all will be made right. In God's presence you don't even ask the questions, you just know. Standing in God's presence doesn't so much give you the answers to the questions, but rather those questions become a non-issue! Job approached God with the same queries and suffering and when God revealed himself Job replied, "I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more." (Job 40:3). The answers are not our accustomed black-and-white understandings but a new knowing in the face of God. We understand only in part now but then we shall know as we are known!

St. Thomas Aquinas, a learned doctor of the church, has written many theological books. He wrote about God's nature and defended the faith. At the end of his life he had a dramatic experience of God's presence. He then said, "I can write no more. All that I have written seems like straw." In other words, there are no words, when it comes to writing about God's presence. Words convey meaning, but words are not enough. There is something, someone so glorious and wonderful that awaits us, that words cannot convey its meaning.

St. Faustina had a vision of the Risen Jesus and Jesus told her to paint an image of him and underneath to put the words, "Jesus I trust in you." No matter how many words you may use to convey the meaning about God, all can be boiled down into two words "Trust God." If you have had a near-death experience, life teaches us that God is trustworthy. Strive to achieve holiness, no one will attain perfection. God simply asks for our faith in him, our trust. Even though you may go through a lot of sufferings and hardships and an uncertain future, the prayer of your heart should be, "Lord, I do not understand, but I trust you!" Amen.

(Image of Divine Mercy >)



God Is Love (1 John 4:8)

In Italy there is a small town in east central Italy, called Lanciano. In the year 750, a priest was presiding at the Eucharist. He had doubts about the real presence of Jesus at Mass. As he was celebrating, suddenly the bread turned into flesh and the wine changed into real blood! The priest was amazed by this miracle and it led him into a deep faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. This has been one of the central tenants of the Catholic faith for centuries. Jesus is really present in the auspices of bread and wine. The host and blood from that miracle was safeguarded and protected and are available for viewing today.

(Image of Miracle >).



The flesh is about the size of a three inch round host. The blood, coagulated into five regular globules, and is kept in a cup. 52 years ago (3/4/1971) two scientists, professors from the University of Siena, conducted experiments on the elements. The analysis were conducted with absolute scientific precision and they were documented with a series of microscopic photographs. Below is the finding of their experiments.

The scientists discovered that not only was the bread–host turned into human flesh, but also the flesh was heart tissue. In the Eucharist God, he is giving us his very heart, his self, for us in love. God is giving his heart to us because God is love. The heart is the symbol of love. For God to give us his heart means that he gave us the center of who he is. His heart is giving and forgiving.

The scientists also examined the blood. They found that it was the most rare type, type AB. This is not the universal blood type and anyone with this blood type can safely receive a transfusion from someone with any other blood type. (<https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/physician-tells-of-eucharistic-miracle-of-lanciano-1866>)

One would assume that type AB blood would probably be the universal donor, since Jesus was always giving to people. But that is not the case. One must come to understand, that Jesus was always receiving people. He ministered to the marginalized and outcasts. Often it was sinners, tax collectors, or prostitutes that he attracted. He bore a lot of flak from the religious leaders of his day because he associated with outcasts. One day while sitting at table with many tax collectors and sinners, the Pharisees saw this, and they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard them he replied, "Those who are well have no need of a doctor, but those who are sick." (Matthew 9:10–13).

Jesus is always inviting us, "Come to me." (Matthew 11:28) in John's Gospel, when Jesus was discoursing about the Eucharist he made this beautiful comment, "All that the Father gives me will come to me; and the one who comes to me I will not cast out." (John 6:37). Jesus is the universal receiver. He loves you. Simply approach him right now, just as you are.

In some churches, you may see a mosaic of a bird wounding itself and bleeding. Beside and beneath the bird you may see little chicks drinking the blood. In the upper room in Jerusalem, the traditional place of the Last Supper, you will see a similar carving on one of the capitals (in architecture, crowning member of a column). Why this image on an altar and at the place of the Last Supper?

Tradition has it that the mother pelican will actually wound herself and feed her young with her blood so that they won't go hungry. The pelican appears our various altars, churches, and at the site of the Last Supper because it is an appropriate image to show God's love for us. In the person of Jesus, God has actually been wounded and he feeds us with his shed blood out of love for us. When we eat his body and drink his blood, we participate in the love he has for us. In fact, one of the earliest terms for Eucharist was an agape feast. Agape is one of the Greek words for love. This particular word for love has the meaning of God's love which is unmerited, undeserved and unconditional. The pelican image is related to the Eucharist because God's love is also sacrificial. Jesus actually gave himself to God and to the world on the Cross. For Catholics, this one sacrifice is re-presented in an un-bloody way every time a Mass is celebrated. We are celebrating God's awesome, unconditional, profound love for each of us.

God holds the wealth and breath and depths of human experience in his heart. He is full of wisdom, majesty and grandeur. God's affection and care for each of us is without limit. Everything that is beautiful, lovely and gracious flows from his heart. He has graciously called all of us into being from nothing. God walks with us through thick and thin, delivers us, and saves us. God fills the universe with his majesty. God is simply outstanding!

"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us." (Romans 5:5). The story of the miracle of Lanciano is a love story. The Eucharist is God's love story. God sends his son who sacrifices himself for us out of love. In a near-death experience, what you encounter when you are ushered into God's presence is love.

The Power of Love

God's love for you is intensely personal. You sense that you are known and loved even before you were born into this world. His love is unconditional. God's care and affection for you is not conditioned on your goodness; rather, there is a powerful, pulsating, goodness radiating from God that it is overwhelming. This love is an ardent affection. It is not some philosophical, intellectual, rational idea of love. God's love is an energetic passion. God's love is affectionate. It is very intimate and personal.

You quickly realize that not only does God love you, but that he was in love with you. That is, he knows you through and through and still has his heart set upon you. There is a profound and self communication and self sharing with God. You are coming into communion with who God is as a person! You begin to understand and know God! You feel his radiant thoughts towards you. This communication with God in a near-death experience is, telepathically, and you begin to come to self understanding. There are no secrets. You realize just how vulnerable and intimate God wants to be.

It is "scary" to think about God as love, because you are overwhelmed with the intensity and intimacy by his love. Agape love was displayed through Jesus in his willingness to be tortured on the Cross. True love is willing to suffer. This love is inexhaustible, indefatigable and so penetrating. God is not afraid of commitment. You share a wonderful oneness with God and a deep personal union of which newlyweds is but a symbol.

God is extremely devoted to us and he will remain faithful and never falter. There is a great depth and determination in his passionate love. The force and strength of God's love is overwhelming, so encompassing that you lose yourself in it. You are so absorbed in God's love you come to understand the words of St. Paul, "I am sure that neither death... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38–39). God's love is truly more powerful than death itself!

Paul spoke about the scope of the glorious power of God's love when he wrote, "May God give you the ability to know what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe." (Ephesians 1:17–18). Our universe gives us an example of the love and greatness of God. Scientists peering out into space who once thought there were a billion galaxies out there now say there is an immeasurable number when viewed through the powerful James Webb telescope. Soon this telescope will enable us to peer back in time to what the universe looked like soon after the Big Bang.

God's love is unbounded. There is no beginning or end to it. There are no borders. (Wisdom 13:5). The suffering of the cross reveals its depths. It is powerful, creative, expansive and life-giving. In the near-death experience, thinking about how old the universe is, and the eight billion people who inhabit the earth, you get a glimpse into the power and majesty of God's love.

Because of God's love, you will always be valuable in his eyes. God is able at one and the same time to be aware of all people at once. We never need to believe the lie that we are alone or that our lives don't matter. The wonderful truth that God is always with us means we need not feel desolate, abandoned or forsaken. We have great worth and value. God will never fail us. God says, "You are precious in my eyes, honored, and I love you." (Isaiah 43:4).

Jesus: The Cure For The Insecure

At some point in our life everyone must come to the realization of self-acceptance. This is difficult because we are all acutely aware of our misshapen bodies, persistent faults, wayward thoughts and impure motivations. We are all limited and lacking in certain gifts. In other words we all have faults.

Recognize your faults and face them. Come to terms with yourself and recognize that God loves you. You are lovable not because of anything you do or say, but because God is in love with you. God's love leads you into a deep, basic, inner decision of self-acceptance. You are then able to forgive yourself for the wrongs you have committed, laugh at yourself when you are afraid, and not beat yourself up when you do not perform perfectly. Those who sin by letting themselves go physically and then giving up on their dreams are manifesting self-rejection. God cares for you and he wants you to take care of yourself. Encourage yourself, discipline yourself, and set goals. Strive to bear fruit and be a blessing to people. Be gentle on yourself when you yield to fear or fail. Remain determined and try not to compromise. These are the hallmarks of self-acceptance and personal growth.

God knows you through and through and still loves you. His love helps you to change how you view yourself. In the words of the *Desiderata*, "I am a child of the universe and I have a right to be here." I have a right to be here because God himself called me into being. You are a right to be here because God wants you here. God created his one and only universe with you in it. All of us were created for a purpose.

Do not despise yourself or focus on your shortcomings. You are more than just okay; the Bible says that you are very good. Genesis (1:31). God will always be in love with you. The devil wants you to reject yourself and will do everything he can to convince you to do so. He will try to make you give up on your dreams and sabotage your life. Receiving, accepting, and experiencing God's love will help you to accept yourself and become more self-secure. Knowing that God approves of you in Christ will help you to approve of yourself. The reality of God's love will bring healing for the scars that life can bring.

Who Do People Say That I Am?

Many of us need to work and our self-image. But what about our God-image? We develop our image of God in a number of ways. The input from parents, priests, T.V., friends, and books that meditate on a sense of what God is like. God-image is the perception of God that we hold deep within our heart. More important than God's attributes, such as being all-powerful or all-knowing, is how we believe God relates to us.

For example, many grew up in a strict, harsh church environment. Maybe you had parents who stressed the rigorous laws of religion. Possibly you had a pastor who was stern and never smiled. What tends to happen in situations like these is that people develop an idea of a God who is demanding and harsh. People would then think, "God never has any fun and doesn't want us to have fun." Or "God wants perfect obedience and anything short deserves punishment." God does not call us to perfection, but to maturity. God's laws and rules and regulations are many and no human being can live up to them. The fruit of such thinking is that 6

you always feel like you have failed God. You sense that God is out to get you. Any little suffering that you have in life you can interpret as a punishment because you are not good and perfect. You sense that you will never measure up because of what you have done or not done.

The other extreme that people fall into is thinking that God is their buddy. God is a sweet, serendipitous, "anything goes" God because forgiveness abounds no matter what. People who believe this are always talking to God, but to a God of their own imagination and making, not the true God. While God is a God of tender love, he is also a God of justice. God is not watching for your every false move so that he can condemn you. He is looking for your growth and wants to develop a personal intimate relationship with you. He does not want to punish you, but he may discipline you because he loves you. (Hebrews 12:5–11).

If you have a harsh image of God ingrained in you because of past misdeeds and you feel that you are way beyond the limits of reconciliation with God, when you experience a near-death encounter of God's love, you come to realize in the depths of your being that God is for you, and not against you. In spite of your powerlessness, you find that God actually helps you rather than condemns you. Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. If you stumble along the way, it is God himself who picks you up. If you fail, it is God who forgives you. When you are weak, it is God who gives you strength. "If God is for us, who can be against?" (Romans 8:31).

An encounter with God's love helps to bring you healing in your God-image. God is not the big eye in the sky out to get you. Neither is God the great big teddy bear who says, "Anything goes." God is your Father, of profound character, integrity and grace. A contact with God's love in a near-death experience, helps you to grow in leaps and bounds in your image of God. God's love brings you to a solid God-image and healing.

The New Catholic Catechism echoes the old Baltimore Catechism: we were created to know, love, and serve God in this world and to be happy with him in the next. (Catechism #1). This is the reason and purpose of our existence. There ought to be less emphasis on law and servitude and more on love and relationship. Instead of loving God because it is commanded, we need to grow to the point where we fall in love with God.

God loves you. God is in love with you. No matter what sins you have committed or wrong you have done, God is there for you. God's love is the greatest power in the universe. Believe in his love. Nothing, not even death, will ever separate you from it. "I am my beloved's and his desire is for me." (Song 7:10). Christianity is not so much a religion but rather a love affair between God and each individual person. Christianity is a sacred romance. Nothing is more intimate, rapturous, and thrilling than being loved by God and loving him in return. The question is not how religious you are; rather, but, what kind of lover are you? The first commandment is this: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and with all your mind and strength. (Mark 12:30).



The First Commandment

1. I AM THE LORD THY GOD: THOU SHALT NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME.

COMMANDS: faith, hope, love, and worship of God; reverence for holy things; prayer.

FORBIDS: idolatry; superstition; Spiritism; tempting God; sacrilege; attendance at false worship.