

# APPROACHING GOD

## Experiencing God

**For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand**

Gerard Manly Hopkins

*As a focus of absolute trust, one to whom you can give yourself without fear of betrayal, the holy mystery of God undergirds and implicitly gives direction to all of a believing person's enterprises, principles, choices, systems of values, and relationships.*

Elizabeth Johnson

*A crucial, if not the most basic question of all theology is the question about the right way to speak about God.*

Wolfhart Pannenberg

*God is not exterior evidence, but the secret call within us.*

Olivier Clement

*Knowledge of God is not a subject's conceptual grasp of an object, it's sharing what God is.*

Rowan Williams

*Was the pilgrimage  
I made to come to my own  
self, to learn that in times  
like these and for one like me  
God will never be plain and  
out there, but dark rather and  
inexplicable, as though he were in here?*

R.S,Thomas

**Think about where you have experienced the sacred in your life.**

Where have you felt God closest to you?

How would you attempt to describe this?

As presence, power, guidance, awe, certainty, forgiveness, hope....?

Did it make any difference?

Was this experience "triggered" by natural beauty, place, participation in worship, art, physical activity, relaxation, illness, bereavement, a crisis in personal relationships, silence...?

Do you let this/these experiences inform your present practice of the awareness of God?

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Philip Carter is a retired Anglican Priest. He was the inaugural president of the Australian Ecumenical Council for Spiritual Direction (AECSD). He ran the Julian Centre in Adelaide, an independent and ecumenical centre for spirituality, from 1997-2009.

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C.S. Lewis called such awareness “Patches of God- light in the woods of our experience” and the contemporary novelist Jane Hamilton has one of her characters say., “For me God was something within that allowed me to see”. It is as if we experience God, not as something we see, but the basis of our seeing, not as an object known, but the basis of all our knowing, not as something of value, but the basis for all our valuing. So instead of thinking that we can “grasp” God, as if God is an object among many objects, but the very basis of all our living and knowing, not an “outside” God at all, but one who is the very subject of my being, allowing me to exist, to be “me”. With Paul I can say, “I live, yet not I, but Christ who lives in me”.

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