

# Speaking of God

## Honest Christianity for a World Seeking Hope

### Jesus, the Beloved One

#### God Loves Us, No Matter What

We want to talk now about a reality so profound that it has the power to shape and re-shape the whole course of our lives. It is this: *No matter what, God loves us. Without condition, without limit, without end—we are the Beloved of God.* This is not a sentimental claim or a pious wish; it is the deepest truth of our existence.

How do we know this? We know because this wisdom has been planted in the very core of our being, like a seed that cannot be uprooted. It resonates in moments of joy and beauty, but also in times of suffering and loss. We may ignore it, doubt it, or resist it, and yet it remains—an indelible mark of the Holy One. Our very existence is rooted in love, and despite our human tendency toward self-centeredness or fear, it is only love that can bring us to wholeness, to peace, and to the fullness of life for which we were made.

When we speak of “authenticity,” we are not borrowing the shallow version often

promoted in popular culture, which can be reduced to “just being yourself” or “following your own truth.” The authenticity we speak of is deeper, richer, and far more demanding. It means coming face to face with the fundamental nature of our existence: Who are we, in the depths, when all illusions are stripped away? What does it mean to live as one who is, at the root, Beloved by God?

Authenticity in this sense calls us to align our lives with this truth, to live in a way that reflects our origin in divine love. It means allowing the knowledge of God’s love to inform our choices, to shape our relationships, to inspire our work, and to steady our hearts in times of trial. It is not merely a matter of expressing our individuality, but of surrendering ourselves to the reality that our truest self is found in communion with the One who made us and calls us Beloved.

### The Core

Beneath the noise, beneath the role,  
there burns a light within the soul—  
not earned or bought, nor torn apart,  
a sacred love, the truest heart.

We spend our days in masks and show,  
yet deeper still, the waters flow.  
To live from love, and not disguise,  
is where our deepest self shall rise.

For only when we dare to see  
that love is truth—are we set free.

### A Remarkable Reality

That fundamental nature referred to just above is not one that we create but one that—we humbly believe—comes to us as gift from the Author of our very being, the Holy One who is our loving and gracious God.

Yes, dear reader, the divine presence of love is a constitutive element of your being. Yours, mine, the trees in the forest, and the birds in the sky. What is being? In simple terms, to be is to exist. Everything that exists *is*. We are something rather than nothing. Connecting these rather esoteric dots, we believe that God is Being itself (Being with an upper-case B as the Author of our being and the source of all that is). As we saw above, when God announced the divine name to Moses as recorded in Exodus 3:14, God said, simply, *I AM WHO AM*.

Thomas Aquinas said it this way: God is Being itself, or in the Latin of Aquinas, *ipsum esse subsistens*. God is not one being among



many, as we are, but God is Being as such. We and everything else that exists have being because we participate in God's Being. That is, we share in God's goodness and love. All beings—people, plants, animals, and even rocks and mountains—thus receive their being from God. Being thus begets beings.

When we pause and look inward, when we contemplate our being and existence, when we consider the core of who we are, we often sense the Presence of what we have been calling the Holy One. And even though this is wrapped in great mystery, there is a conversation unfolding day in and day out between us in our essence and the divine Presence.

And when we die, perhaps it is our being—our very being and nothing more—that continues to exist in the Holy One from whom it flows.

## Theological Reflection about God as the Author of our being

- What does it mean to you personally that your very existence is not random or accidental, but authored and sustained by God?
- How does seeing God as the Author of your being change the way you understand your life's story—with its joys, struggles, and mysteries?
- If God is continually “writing” our being into existence, how might this truth call us to live with greater gratitude, trust, and openness to God's guidance?
- How can reflecting on God as Author of all being inspire us to honor the dignity of every person, recognizing that each life is a sacred story held in God?

## Jesus Knew Deep Down

Jesus also experienced this journey inward, to the core of his being, to the fundamental elements of his existence. As a human being like us, my friends, he must have been astonished when, at his baptism, he heard the divine voice, figuratively speaking, address him in his heart. And what did the Holy One say? “You are my Beloved one, my child, and I cherish you, love you, and am pleased with you” (RMV). On this point, the Gospels agree. See Mark 1:9-11, Matthew 3:16-17, and Luke 3:21-22. In the Gospel of John, the Baptist

witnesses to this in 1:32: “I saw the Spirit come to him as a dove alights on a tree branch. It remained with him and said, “This is my Chosen One, my child” (RMV).

Well, my goodness, dear reader, this may have been amazing to Jesus to hear, but it's also astonishing to us! Absolutely remarkable. It's amazing because deep within each of us such a divine voice also sounds, calling us with the same love. “Maria, I love you. John, you are mine. Rebecca, you are my Beloved one. Jose, I am pleased with you.”

## Into the Desert

As Jesus went from his baptism to his forty-day Lenten desert experience, these words burned in his heart. “You are my Beloved. I am with you. I love you. Do not fear.” This is what empowered him in the face of those temptations. He was tempted to abandon his authentic self, revealed by God at his baptism as being Beloved, for the pleasures of instant gratification, self-glory, and power over others. The temptations Jesus faced are deeply human—and we face them, too. They reflect the core distortions of desire that challenge all of us, and we see this play out as politicians and business leaders act for their own benefit,

demand the loyalty and glory of their subjects, and plot to establish authoritarian regimes in place of democracy.

The essential questions that this poses for us are these. What will I put my trust in? What or whom do I worship? Who do I believe myself to be? This brings us back to the matter of authenticity. Knowing he was the Beloved one, loved and cared for by God, Jesus chose truth over illusion, divine will over self-interest, and patient endurance in the face of hardship. This is what Jesus chose because these values are godly values, and they were written into Jesus' heart.

## **The Choices We Face**

They're also written into our hearts. We must learn to choose truth in place of lies. Liars use their deceit to gain power over others, to ridicule them, and to destroy them as we have seen in recent elections. We must learn to choose the Way of Jesus—which brings us together as a family of love rather than acting only with self-interest in mind. The opposite of such unity is the division we see among ourselves today—division and hatred sown to consolidate power in the hands of the liars.

We have seen this distortion play out as wealthy billionaires abandon their inner values to extend their wealth even more while the poor suffer. We must witness to fairness even when it leads to the cross. We must, in a word, put our lives on the line to defend the poor, care for the earth, speak up in the face of injustice, welcome immigrants, and do

whatever is needed for the least of Jesus' sisters and brothers.

We can only make these choices for godly values, however, when we know and believe that we are loved. This is the real truth of life. In practice, we need to hear good things said to us. We need affirmation. We need friendship and companionship when the times are rough. We need a community of support. In a word, we need to accept God's love at the core of our being.

As we can see, to be loved is the deepest affirmation of our most authentic self. For Jesus, it empowered him to launch his pastoral ministry work among the people. For us, knowing that we belong to God who loves us gives us the courage and power to do the same. God will never abandon us. God will remain with us no matter what. Do you believe that?

## **The Sins of the World**

Given the pain of the world, the poverty, ignorance, illness, and injustice around us, it's hard to believe that God cares. Given the rise of authoritarian governments, the withdrawal of aid to the poor, the rejection of immigrants and newcomers, one might ask if there is love anywhere. How can we be so certain we are loved when the world around us is unloving and ungenerous? When it's unforgiving and cruel?

The answer, my friends, is in that "ontological element" of our lives, deeply implanted within us, that hard-to-believe reality that we are the Beloved of God. It's ontological, meaning that it's a fundamental aspect of being human. At the deepest level of human existence, we find the presence of this love. Again, we aren't the authors of this loving presence, but we are its happy recipients.

## **Are We Worthy?**

Many people believe that we must first shed all our selfishness and sin in order to be worthy of God's love. In the liturgies of many Christian churches, we actually pray these words, "O Lord, I am not worthy to receive you," quoting the centurion with the sick

servant in Matthew 8:8 who wanted Jesus to heal his servant but did not feel worthy to have Jesus come to his house. The lesson in this story suggests that Jesus doesn't base his love on our worthiness, but he bases his love on God's unconditional regard for us. Jesus ignored the

centurion's humility, as the story goes, and went directly to that house. In the same way, his love makes us worthy.

Grace is a free gift, and divine love is completely unearned. The culture in which we live is often "worth-based." If you don't earn your way, you aren't valuable, regardless of your mitigating circumstances. Our meaning and value come from allowing ourselves to be loved by God, from surrendering ourselves into God's loving arms, figuratively speaking.

"Our Christian lives begin not with doctrine and good works, but with the amazement born of realizing that we are loved, prior to any response on our part. By over-emphasizing our efforts to do good works, we have created an ideal of holiness excessively based on ourselves... to achieve a reward" (Pope Francis, Holy Mass and Canonization of The Blessed, May 15, 2022).

### **Theological Reflection about living as a Beloved of God**

- If you honestly believed—at the deepest level—that you are God's Beloved, how would it change the way you see yourself and your worth?
- How does living as a Beloved One shape the way you respond to failure, suffering, or times of doubt?
- In what ways does knowing yourself as Beloved call you to treat others differently—with greater mercy, patience, or respect?
- How can the awareness of being God's Beloved influence your choices, priorities, and daily way of life?