

A person in silhouette is shown from behind, looking up at a vast, starry night sky. The person is wearing a dark jacket. The sky is filled with numerous stars of varying brightness. A semi-transparent white box with decorative corners is centered over the lower part of the image, containing the title and author's name.

Living in God's Presence

By Francis Luna

Booklet

The logo for Scepter, featuring a stylized red book icon with three pages visible, followed by the word "Scepter" in a red serif font.

Scepter

No. 48

SCEPTER BOOKLETS

Living in God's Presence

Nihil Obstat: R. J. Cumming, D.D., Censor librorum; Imprimatur: David Norris, Westminster; May 30, 1975

By Francis Luna



Scepter Publishers

PO Box 360694,

Strongsville, Ohio 44136

Toll Free: 800-322-8773 (US & Canada only)

Tel: 212-354-0670

Fax: 646-417-7707

info@scepterpublishers.org

www.scepterpublishers.org

©1976 Scepter Publishers

Second Edition, © 2019

Booklet and Cover design by Parker Eidle

Booklet Number: 48

© Scepter Publishers, Inc. This information protected by copyright of Scepter Publishers, Inc., New York, NY USA. It is for the free use of readers and we encourage you to redistribute this without permission. None of this information can be sold, either in electronic or print form, unless permission has been obtained from Scepter Publishers, Inc. Direct all inquiries to info@scepterpublishers.org.

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>God is Always Near</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Living in God's Presence</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Examining Ourselves</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>A Young Heart</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Old Treasure</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>All or Nothing</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Taking Hold of the Spade</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>The Discipline of Work</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Flying Too High</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Little by Little</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Ways to Remember</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Looking to Our Lady</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>No Spooks or Spectators</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>God Within us</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Stay with us</i>	<i>24</i>

INTRODUCTION

We all know the type of person who goes around checking that all the doors and windows are locked, and who maybe even peers into cupboards or under beds to make sure no intruder is lurking there. But a burglar can be nervous too. We can picture him working for the most part in the dark of the night and in a house that is strange to him. As long as he is in the house, he risks being caught by someone who might sound an alarm or call the police. I know of one burglar who took refuge by hiding under a bed. He thought he would be safe there, but unfortunately for him, it was the bed of one of those nervous types who checks everything. When this burglar was found, he was taken aback — all he could say was: “You ought to be ashamed of yourself! A man of your age, going around looking under beds for burglars!”

Somebody who breaks into a house knows he is running risks. Thieves undoubtedly are constantly aware of what might happen to them if they are caught. Yet, in spite this awareness, they persist in their criminal ways. Indeed, their knowledge of the law and its penalties is quite ineffective.

Our awareness of God must not be like this. We cannot be like the nervous burglar hiding under the bed, who is always thinking about the possibility of being caught and punished but continues his risky, criminal behavior.

It is not enough simply to remember our Lord is there: if, as soon as we remember that fact, we realize we are doing wrong or not doing what we ought, then we must actively change our course of behavior.

GOD IS ALWAYS NEAR

There are people who never think of God until they are in danger or some kind of predicament where no earthly help is forthcoming. But if we want to live as God's children, we must realize that we are living in his presence all the time.

Some feel that if they had only been able to see Jesus face-to-face, or had actually been present when he was working a miracle, they would have no problem living close to him. In fact, in taking up this attitude, such people are only trying to make excuses for the little attention they pay to him in their day-to-day lives. What they forget is that loving our Lord means living according to his teaching — it has nothing at all to do with whether one sees him or not. Though we are not among those who literally saw him with their own eyes, we are in the privileged position of being able to see him with the eyes of faith. We know it is a happy position because our Lord himself said to Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have learned to believe” (John 20:29).

Faith teaches us that God cannot be far from anyone — for “in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) — and the happy person is one who really believes this. There can be no half-measures where faith is concerned. It is a commitment that extends to the whole of one's life.

Anyone who believes in a theoretical way, and does no more than give a mental nod of agreement to our Lord's teaching, has faith in theory. But Christianity is not just another theory to which we give intellectual assent. Our faith needs to emanate in our everyday lives, whether we are at work, with family, or even alone. When it is manifest in this way we can really claim that we believe, for the person who brings his life into line with the reality of God's presence everywhere is one who genuinely professes his faith.

If we are to take to heart the blessing Jesus addressed to those who believe in him without having seen him, we must do what we can to bring to life the words God spoke to Abraham: “Live as in my sight, and be perfect” (Genesis 17:1).

LIVING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

God's presence everywhere is a reality we ought constantly to bring to mind. It is our awareness of this fact, not the fact itself, to which the spiritual writers refer when they talk about the need to live our lives in God's presence.

In order to do this, we must remember that he is always near us, and some people think this requires special imaginative gifts on their part. They think they should have a mental image of our Lord constantly before them, perhaps as depicted in Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper or some other work of art. But if such mental imagery were really required, the constant awareness of God would preclude all other activities and make it impossible for us to live our lives. Think of a housewife timing a roast, or an accountant adding up a column of figures, or a factory worker handling a delicate piece of machinery. If these people were to maintain a constant mental image of our Lord, the results would be disastrous — ruined meals, incorrect totals, and other botched jobs.

Fortunately a constant awareness of God is something much easier. What we have to do is realize, somehow, that God is always near us. Then we have to ensure that this realization, a pious practice recommended by all the saints, leads us to action. With God always there with us, we must desire and seek what he is asking of us every moment of our lives.

EXAMINING OURSELVES

Awareness of the fact that God is everywhere is our starting point for trying to live each moment in his presence. But a vague, general idea that God is everywhere is not enough — we need to bring it home and make it alive in ourselves.

It is all too easy to be lax in this regard. Consider a man who prides himself on his truthfulness but suddenly finds himself telling a lie. When he confesses this and the priest advises him to take special note of any similar failings in the next week, he feels misunderstood, for he knows he is not a liar. But suppose he takes the advice to heart and examines his conscience carefully each night. He finds he has told two lies the next day, another the day after, and maybe quite a few the following days. In this way he comes to see that the priest was right in drawing his attention to his fault.

Similar stories can be told of other people who feel they already live their lives in God's presence. If they really attend to their actions and consciences, they will come to see that they are aware of God's presence for only a few minutes in the whole day. Sometimes they are aware of him for but a few seconds.

Constant awareness of God is something that requires effort. This does not mean we must be consciously thinking of him all day long, but we do need to put our minds to the business of achieving this awareness. We've got to be convinced that God is always near us. Too often we live as though he were far away, in the heavens high above, and we forget that he is also continually by our side (cf. St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, n. 267).

It may be easy to be convinced of this in a very general way, but it is an entirely different matter to make it part of the fabric of our lives. And like anything worth having, it is not easy to come by. A continual effort to live in God's presence means a continual effort to respond to his grace.

A YOUNG HEART

Sometimes this response to grace is not at all easy. Countless things in life clamor for our attention, as we exert ourselves trying to improve our social standing, gain professional prestige, or attain other things our hearts desire. Yet throughout we must preserve that sense of wonder we had as children if we truly want to live in God's presence. In our spiritual life we have to be forever young, so that we are constantly happy with God and our sins and failings do not cloud our vision of him.

Everything is new to a child, and he is constantly filled with wonder and surprise. A while ago I had a letter from a grandmother, describing how she had taken her eldest grandson out for a walk. Suddenly he stopped in front of a poster advertising a film and excitedly pointed to one of the letters, saying, "Look, Granny, look! That's an 'o.' Look at it!" Of course she did, she told me, as did all the passers-by.

The things of God should entail that element of wonder for us, but too often we grow old before our time. We think that certain devotions are too childish, and we separate ourselves from God, making ourselves like orphans, with God our Father absent from our lives. In reality we can never lose him, however, because he is always our Father, even when we live as though he is not there. In acting like this we age unnecessarily, for our spiritual life lacks love. But truly we are never orphans. God is always with us, and there is no reason for sadness in our lives.

OUR TREASURE

When Jesus was teaching his disciples, he used parables and comparisons so that they could better grasp what he meant. Some words of the gospel divinely illuminate the points I have been making.

Do not lay up treasure for yourselves on earth, where there is moth and rust to consume it, where there are thieves to break in and steal it; lay up treasure for yourselves in heaven, where there is no moth or rust to consume it, no thieves to break in and steal. Where your treasure-house is, there your heart is too (Matthew 6:19–21).

Our Lord's words are very clear. There is no sense in making our greatest efforts for the gain of money, power, or honors for their own sake. What we should prize are those goods that can give us true happiness, both here on Earth and beyond in heaven. God is the greatest treasure of all, and nothing that exists can compare to him. Riches are spent; health is lost; beauty fades. God alone is unfailing and unchanging. If we assume that we think of God often, we should examine our lives more carefully, for we may be mistaken. We ought to consider seriously just where in fact our heart is, since our Lord says our heart is where our treasure is.

What sort of things do people set their hearts on? There is a surprising variety of answers to this question. Some set their hearts on seeing a play or film, others on reaching professional or social eminence. Our hearts can be set on a new outfit or car, an antique clock or piece of furniture, a book we have been wanting to read. There are as many answers as there are individual tastes and preferences.

But how many have their hearts set on our Lord? How many of us live by faith, putting God first and our personal ambitions second?

Someone once remarked to me, "These past few days I've been far more concerned about myself than about God." This wording stuck in my mind. We may want God to come first, but does he in reality? What are we thinking about most of the time? What do we dream about? What does our heart desire the majority of our time? How often do we pause to offer up the work we are doing, or the joys or setbacks we are experiencing? How often do we make a heartfelt act of thanksgiving?

The answers to these questions are known only privately by each of us, but many of us, if we take note of these answers, must admit that our minds and hearts are not on the things Jesus advised us to value.

It would be a pity not to see the importance of following our Lord's teaching, consoling ourselves, perhaps, with the thought that we do not treat him too badly. It is a great pity when we do not look for him in every moment of our ordinary lives, fooling ourselves into thinking we can make self-love compatible with the carrying out of his will. Our Lord himself warned us, in words we would do well to consider more often than we likely do: "A man cannot be the slave of two masters at once, either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will devote himself to the one and despise the other" (Matthew 6,24).

ALL OR NOTHING

There are people who think that our Lord's instruction about giving to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's simply means that, once we have carried out certain religious duties, the rest of our time is ours to use for our own purposes. But truly we cannot take time off from our commitment of love; even if we have been reasonably generous with our money, made efforts to be good-humored with others, prayed now and then, and received the sacraments, we cannot think that any remaining free time is no real concern of God's, that it is ours to do with as we please.

This way of thinking is wrong, for love never takes time off. If we are God's children, then we are his children all the time. What would we think of a mother who forgets all about her children as soon as they are off to school? Can we imagine two lovers who never think of one another unless they are together? We all know love transcends time. Truly, either we love all the time, or we simply do not love at all.

Our love for God is no different. Either we love him all the time, or we cannot claim to love him at all. There is no sense in being devout only up to a certain point, then forgetting him and being totally immersed in our own interests. A child of God must maintain a constant dialogue with him throughout the day.

Everything can and should be shared with our Lord. Whether we are working or enjoying our leisure time, every single thing we do can be shared with him. This truth is so simple that it is astonishing we do not recognize it immediately; but the wonderful thing is that when we do, it leads to our real happiness.

TAKING HOLD OF THE SPADE

According to a stereotype, people from the part of Spain called Andalusia are not hard workers — they take life easy. I think this may be a bit of a slander, really, for anywhere you go you can find idle people. Nevertheless, the reputation persists, and of course there are some people who live up to it. Take, for example, a man from Seville I once heard about. He was a very nice fellow, kind-hearted and sociable. But where work was concerned, he always stood out for his complete lack of enthusiasm. Somehow he managed to get through school, at which point he did not pursue a career but rather he spent his days at home with his parents.

His siblings left the nest, one by one, but he stayed on and was perfectly content to do so. His apparent lack of motivation to work prompted a family conference. It was no use suggesting that he to do anything strenuous, of course, but his family encouraged him to get a job at a nearby U.S. Air Force base. Though he was greatly taken aback, he saw they were serious. Moreover, he was reassured when they explained that he wouldn't need to overexert himself. The Americans, they told him, are technologically advanced, and all the hard work at the base would be done by various machinery. There would be machines to dig holes, pile up sand, and so on.

They bought him a ticket. They put him on the train. When he arrived at the base he was to ask for the foreman, who would be expecting him. Off he went, good-humored as ever, and when he got there and introduced himself, he was given, of all things, a spade.

This puzzled him, but he was ready to give his best effort. So he examined the spade, up and down and sideways, and then he asked the man beside him, "I say, where do you plug in this gadget?"

Some people fancy there is never any need for spadework. They think they can attain constant awareness of God by flipping a switch. They understand this awareness is necessary, but they feel it ought to come automatically. Real life, however, is not like that. Each of us needs to respond to God's grace individually and make a continual effort to do so. Of course

God's grace can accomplish anything; but it is also true that he helps those who help themselves, and he wants us to use every bit of strength we have.

This is not to say we must make superhuman efforts. We are never asked to do more than we are able. Nobody considers a working day of eight hours extraordinary, and plenty of people will work overtime and put in ten, twelve, or even more hours without thinking this heroic. A mother who dedicates her whole day to her family never considers this extraordinary. We know there are things to be done if life is to go on, so we do them. Why, then, should the effort to have a constant awareness of God seem so hard?

We do not consider ourselves heroes just because we spend our time working. Similarly, we should not think that trying to live constantly in God's presence is something heroic and extraordinary, especially as it is the key to our happiness here on Earth and ultimately in heaven.

THE DISCIPLINE OF WORK

The story about the man from Andalucia ends with his question unanswered, but we can surely guess what sort of answer he got. My own guess is that the foreman gave him one look and said, "That gadget plugs in to your two hands there, and the power it works by is the strength God gave you. Put your back into it and get on with the job!"

And that is what we need to do. Get on with the job. It is not as hard as we might make it out to be. Perhaps you think of all the things you have to do each day. Then, on top of all that, you consider the task of keeping our Lord in mind constantly. Surely life is hard enough already without complicating it further, you think. But is this a correct attitude?

The managing director of a large firm needed somebody he could rely on to perform some important, complex tasks. He consulted with the personnel manager to determine which of his employees was the busiest and hardest worker, and this man was selected for the job. This, certainly, is a commonsense way of proceeding. Somebody who is busy and works hard will be the very person who will execute complex tasks well, for he will be sufficiently alert to attend to all the relevant details.

Ask yourself when it is during the week that you tend to forget the acts of piety you try to keep as daily practices. Very often these things fall by the wayside on Sunday, even though Sunday is usually a fairly free day. The reason for this may be relatively simple. When the healthy tension of work is relaxed, we begin to let things slide. Although it might not seem so, a busy person is the best one to ask if you really need something done. It is no use asking a lazy person who has all the time in the world, for since he knows he has plenty of time, he puts things off. During the day he procrastinates, and when evening comes he decides to turn in early, for the effort of procrastinating has drained his energy. He goes to sleep with the false assurance that tomorrow is another day, but of course tomorrow never really comes. For the next day is today, and today is the time for more procrastinating.

If we feel that a living awareness of God is something very difficult to achieve, we have become confused as to what the spiritual life is all about.

Though we call it the “spiritual” life, truly it must entail our whole being, not just the spiritual part of us that is known as the soul.

God made us as we are, as a unity of body and soul. Thus he is concerned with all the material circumstances of our lives, not just their spiritual dimension. If he had wanted us to be purely spiritual, it would have been no problem for him to make us that way. But he wanted us to be the kind of creatures we are, engaged with the material things around us and constantly bringing them into a dialogue with him that results from an awareness of his presence.

To try to live in some other way is to ignore God's plan for us, thereby setting us on a course for disaster. If we do not look for God in the things that happen to us each day, we are not integrating these everyday things into our struggle for sanctity. They should be in the very forefront, not somewhere out on the fringe. We need to try to understand what St. Teresa of Avila meant when she talked about meeting Christ among the pots and pans.

People who cannot understand this are not really living. They have no idea of what it means to live in love, to find our Lord at work and in the family, to find him in relaxation and professional contacts with colleagues. Maybe they know what the love of God is, but they are not living close to him and basking in the life-giving warmth of that love.

FLYING TOO HIGH

Living our day-to-day life has a tremendous value. But because so many Christians fail to see this, we must continue to hammer it home. Some of them fancy that loving God is a matter of feeling. If they cannot feel the same tenderness for him as a mother feels for her child, they are not loving him. Then there are those who imagine that the love of God is something that involves only the soul. They think of the spiritual life as something only angels can truly enjoy, as something divorced from the material things of the world.

These sorts of mistakes must be avoided. We need always to be finding and taking the opportunities to discuss the many things of each day with our Lord. And we do this in the most natural way possible; he is not asking us to do anything odd that will make our friends and colleagues look askance at us.

If we try to make our interior life something entirely spiritual, we lose the chance to relate the ordinary events of our life to our Lord. Naturally, as he has made us, we are grounded in the material world, and so we are not meant to fly too high or depart from that reality. Remember the legend of Icarus: he fashioned wings in order to fly above all earthly things; but as he approached the sun its heat destroyed the wings, and he crashed to the Earth.

We should not try to raise ourselves above the reality of daily life, for the simple reason that God made us a unity of soul and body. He put us in this world, and it is the place where we are meant to be sanctified.

LITTLE BY LITTLE

Some people have no ear for music or are quite tone deaf. Maybe you are one of those who are asked to stop singing because their family or friends cannot bear to hear it any longer. Of course it is no disgrace to sing out of tune, because tone deafness is not one's fault; it is something beyond one's control. A person who has it is just born with it.

Unfortunately we sometimes think of awareness of God as though it were a natural gift, like a good musical ear. We figure that just as some people are talented musically and others are not, some people are naturally suited to be constantly living in God's presence while others will never be able achieve that constant awareness.

This way of thinking is false. No one is born with the ability to keep God constantly in mind. Rather, this is a habit learned through practice. Little by little we get better at it, until finally we have mastered it and can relate the many details of our daily lives to our Lord.

We might draw a comparison to the process of learning to talk. When we were tiny the first sound we made was something like "ah." When we came to be aware that our parents were pleased with this performance, we repeated it, "ah, ah." At some point mother insisted we had said "mama," and father was equally convinced we had said "dada"; in fact, we had only said "ah, ah," but of course we could not settle the argument by telling them that. After many months when we were able to pronounce words. We went on to read and write years later.

Nearly everything has to be learned, little by little, in this way. The development of a sense of God's continual presence with us is no different. We acquire it by dint of practice, day by day, little by little, as we respond more fully to God's grace.

Once we gain this sense of God's presence, we find ourselves referring all things to our Lord, almost in spite of ourselves. It is like the way we find ourselves humming a tune we often can't get out of our mind. At the most unexpected moments it may enter our consciousness. We may be waiting for the bus, running upstairs, or looking at the paper — it seems to haunt us and we cannot get rid of it.

Since our Lord has specifically told us to love him with our whole heart (cf. Matthew 23:37), he is not content if we devote only a few minutes of the day to prayer and then proceed to forget him entirely in everything else we do at work and at home.

WAYS OF REMEMBERING

To remember is to bring something to mind. We know that God is everywhere, but what we must do is constantly bring this reality to mind. Some people do this already, but many more of us should do it as well.

Perhaps you have a bad memory. Plenty of people do, and they come up various ways to aid their memories. They tie knots in handkerchiefs or put rubber bands around their wrists. There are countless devices for jogging the memory. Well, then, why not use them?

As St. Josemaria has recommended: "Make use of those holy 'human devices' that I suggested to help you keep presence of God: aspirations, acts of love and reparation, spiritual Communion, 'glances' at a picture of our Lady" (The Way, n. 272).

Children are often good models of putting these sorts of things into practice. There is a boys' school I know where the chaplain had been discussing the importance of making a morning offering each day at the moment of waking. One boy resolved to do this, but he never seemed to remember amid all the rush of getting ready and leaving for school. He told the priest his problem, and together they worked out a solution. He would put a little pebble in his shoe at night. Then, as soon as he put his shoe on in the morning, he would feel something hard and remember what it was and why it was there. He would remember to make the morning offering and tell our Lord all the coming day was for him. The first day he tried this did not go as expected. Such is childhood — he was well on his way to school, hurrying as usual, before he began to limp and said to his father, "Oh, it's the pebble — the one I put in my shoe to remind me about the morning offering. I forgot it was there!" But at least he did remember, if a little late.

With a little thought, each of us can find a suitable substitute for that pebble. We know our own commitments and obligations. We follow a certain schedule in order to take care of our family and professional needs. What is useful for one person might not be for another, but each of us, without exception, can find some small thing that will help us remember that God is close to us. We need to take the necessary steps in order to attain this

awareness, just as we would take the necessary steps to acquire anything else we might want in life.

We go out of our way to remember the things that are important to us. For example, I know a father who remembers to be careful when he drives through the aid of a family photograph pinned on the dashboard. The inscription reads: "Don't hurry, daddy. We'll wait for you." Office workers write memos to remember important details. Someone who is very sleepy takes time to set the alarm, for it would be very difficult to wake up without it. We do things like this for the sake of our livelihood or health, as we should. But, perhaps more important, we ought to use the same ingenuity and persistence in our efforts to remember that God is always with us.

If something is important to us, we are ready and willing to devote time to it. A young man reads a letter from his girlfriend over and over. A businessman goes to great lengths to maintain a good filing system.

If we want to buy something but are on a limited budget, we comparison shop until we find the best bargain. If we want to love God, we must be convinced that loving him is the most important thing of all. Once we are sure of that, we are ready to use our abilities to figure out the best ways of loving him.

LOOKING TO THE LADY

Nothing is achieved overnight. We must train ourselves and practice, so that when the time comes for us to refer something to our Lord we are not too busy to notice.

When we have decided on the best devices for jogging our memory, we should scatter them throughout the day so that we are repeatedly prompted to think of God's love for us and our need to return that love.

Perseverance is necessary. At night when we examine our conscience before going to bed, we should check that we have done everything possible to make ourselves aware of God's love throughout the day.

This can become second nature to us. A friend of mine was telling me recently about a family he went to visit. The children were shy at first, as children often are with strangers, and during the meal they were models of good behavior. But after they were sent upstairs, while the adults were having coffee, they began fighting. Someone went up to settle them down, and a small boy could be heard howling for his mother. As he came down the stairs to take refuge with her, his mother said to the guest, "Just wait, you'll see he'll quiet down right away." Sure enough, for a moment or two he was silent. "Now he'll start again," she said, and so he did, roaring away with renewed vigor. No wonder people talk about feminine intuition, the visitor was thinking, until the mother explained how she had known what would happen. Ever since the children were tiny, she taught them to say something to our Lady whenever they passed a statue of her that stood on a landing of the stairs. The four-year-old, in the middle of his woe, still remembered to pause and tell our Lady he loved her very much, before he carried on with his complaints.

Maybe we are not so lucky to have been trained to be aware of God and his holy Mother when we were very young, but it is never too late to learn. We can learn to look at our Lady and say a few words whenever we see a picture or statue of her. Just as the four-year-old, we can form such an ingrained habit that not even our sufferings can make us forget her. Remembering her should become such a part of us that when we have not

done so, we know at once something is missing. This practice can become as natural and necessary to us as the air we breathe.

But again, it takes time to acquire this habit, and along the way we need continually to check on our progress. It is not unlike when we learned to read; along the way we were confused and made mistakes, and the process took time and repetition. All that hard work is forgotten now, but we know we had to do it in order to learn.

We need to concentrate on those devices we know work for us, and we must take into consideration our own dispositions and habits as we choose them. This is something we need to figure out for ourselves. Others may give us ideas, but this is helpful only in a very general way, because we alone know our circumstances and environment better than anyone else. What may help a lawyer may not help a housewife. A dressmaker, a bus driver, a teacher, a stage manager — all have different experiences, talents, and needs.

Young or old, in good health or bad, wherever we happen to be, we are always in a situation where we can, and must, turn to God frequently. He has done everything for us, and we need to be close to him.

It is not enough just to think it would be a good idea to do make a habit of prayerful glances at images of our Lady. Indeed, we must actually put the idea into practice. It is not enough just to make a resolution to greet her whenever we see her image. Quite likely we will forget, at first, but we must not give up for that reason. Suppose we do forget upon entering a room with a picture of her, but then we recall after we have there for some time. What is preventing us from leaving briefly and greeting her when we return? This may seem very trivial, but it works. Perhaps our Lady finds it rather touching that we went to that extra trouble for her and in turn prays for the improvement of our memory.

Making this kind of effort is not tremendously difficult. It is a matter of persistence, of not allowing ourselves to give up. All we have to do is use the wits God gave us, and we can be sure he continues to help us through his grace.

NO SPOOKS OR SPECTORS

I was on a car trip years ago when I saw something very strange on the side of the road. In my headlights there appeared a spectral figure, swathed in a winding sheet and emanating an uncanny glow. This sight gave me the fright of my life. I have never believed in ghosts, but for just a moment I almost did. Alone in a strange place and in the gathering dark, your mind can play tricks. You begin to feel that time is standing still, and you are lost in the vastness of the countryside.

As I approached the apparition, however, I could see it was a very solid ghost of flesh and blood. Some country lad had dressed himself in this costume, for reasons only he knew. I suppose he was expecting some friends to be coming that way, and he intended to play a trick on them.

Unreal ghosts like this can appear in the spiritual life too, and we must not be taken in by them. We cannot be frightened by all the difficulties that may arise as we try to make ourselves aware of God's nearness. Nor must we conjure up our own spooks and specters in our efforts to think constantly of God.

Our goal is to love our Lord, and just as in human love, this goal does not require strange or extraordinary means. All we need is to do is take special care of ordinary things and be attentive to the details of our lives. The love of God is not to be measured by the sheer number of tasks we accomplish, but by the love with which we do what needs to be done. Quite often the small and seemingly trivial things offer us the best opportunities to be in constant dialogue with our Lord.

There are countless ways to maintain this dialogue without doing anything out of the ordinary. For example, most people look at a clock or watch frequently throughout the day. Mothers, lawyers, hotel workers, students, bus drivers, and so on — all of us have to check the time. So why not take the occasion, each time you glance at your watch, to say a short prayer? After a while, you will come to associate that glance at the watch with a moment of closeness to God, and you will find yourself remembering him often each day. Of course, for some people this method may not be helpful, but for many it can be very effective.

We can also consider using another one of those actions we repeat often throughout the day, such as answering bells, making or taking phone calls, opening and closing doors. Any of these mundane activities can help us raise our eyes to look toward God. Or consider using the time when we are reading. Any book is read one page at a time, and there is always a moment, as we turn each page, to tell our Lord that we love him and to make an offering. Life gives us so many opportunities, and all we have to do be mindful that they do not slip through our fingers.

If we have the chance to do great things, then by all means let us grasp that chance. But if even if we never have such opportunities, we must not foolishly neglect the everyday things we can use to give God our heart's love.

GOD WITHIN US

The indwelling of the Trinity in our souls is a mystery of Christianity that most of us hardly ever reflect on, even though it is one of the truths our Lord emphasized to us.

“If a man has any love for Me, he will be true to my word; and then he will win my Father’s love, and We will both come to him, and make our continual abode with him” (John 14:23). The indwelling of the Trinity, as you know, means that the three divine persons come to live in us.

This means God lives in our souls as in a temple. St. Paul reminds us of this when he says, “Do you not understand that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit has his dwelling in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16)

Truly, this is so. God is with us, making us take part in his own life. So we should not look for God only in the many things that happen to us; indeed, we must look for him also within ourselves. We can be sure he is there as long as we are in a state of grace.

Note the words of St. Josemaria: “Recollection. Seek God within you and listen to Him” (The Way, n. 319). It is true that in the spiritual life things do not always work out as we would prefer, and there are times when it is not easy to listen to our Lord. These times are when we need to find ways to keep him in mind.

But it is just as true that there are times when listening to him is easy. Awareness of God will not always mean making an effort to find him. Sometimes for just a moment, but sometimes for hours or days or very long stretches, the thought of God present within us makes it possible for us to be in constant conversation with him. At times like these we do not need to seek him out in the things around us. We are living in his company and getting to know him by his grace.

Since God is in us, he wants us to live in the knowledge of the fact and not limit ourselves to merely thinking about it. “I have come so that they may have life” (John 10:10), Jesus tells us, and he is not going to be satisfied until this life he has given us becomes a reality through the good actions we do to prove our love for him.

There is no better awareness of God than to live our lives according to his divine teaching, so that at every moment of our lives we can say with St. Paul, “I am alive; or rather, not I; it is Christ that lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

This should be our goal, to know that Christ is living in us, lighting the way for us and filling us with in all that we do. Before this can happen, we must respond to grace in a very personal way, as Vatican II teaches us:

Only by the light of faith and by meditation on the word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in whom ‘we live and move and have our being’ (Acts 17:28), seek his will in every event, see Christ in all men whether they be close to us or strangers, and make correct judgements about the true meaning and value of temporal things, both in themselves and in their relation to man’s final goal (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 4).

STAY WITH US

We must learn to see Christ in our neighbor and to regard everything with the eyes of faith. God's presence is not something grasped through the bodily senses, but we can be sure that he is close to us when we are making the effort to find him as the apostles and other disciples did.

A scene from the gospel can help us here. After our Lord's resurrection, two of his disciples were going toward a place called Emmaus. Jesus approached them and walked along with them. But they could not recognize him. When he asked why they were so sad, they told him all about Jesus and how he had died. As they neared Emmaus, Jesus indicated he was continuing on, but they pressed him to remain with them. He did, when he sat down at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and offered it to them; at which point their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. With that, he disappeared from their sight. They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us when He spoke to us on the road, and when He made the scriptures plain to us?" (Luke 24:28–33).

In our daily lives we can have experiences like this one. We are walk beside our Lord but we cannot see him. Still, there is something inside us that makes us certain he is there. True enough, we have never seen Jesus with our own eyes, but all the same we have known many a time that he is beside us. Something like an inner voice tells us firmly that God is near and all that scripture says is true. Rarely can we support the claim with sensory evidence, but nevertheless it speaks with a conviction and authority as strong as any other empirical experience.

Those who have faith can say with certainty that they have seen God, even though they have never seen our Lord in his humanity. Let nobody deceive himself and think that he needs to see our Lord in any way other than through the eyes of faith. Faith is sufficient for us, and just as the disciples traveling to Emmaus, we can feel our hearts burning within us.

Jesus is always near, even though we cannot see him. He is in every soul that is in grace. He is present in so many things that happen to us throughout the day. When things seem hard — and when things go well — what better words can we use than those the disciples spoke when they asked

him not to leave: "Stay with us." We should repeat these words often, day after day, during work and leisure alike, with our friends and family. In every situation we can say to our Lord: "Mane nobiscum." Stay with us, Lord.



**We want to help you become a saint every day,
from right where you are and share Christ with
others.**

Have you ever tasted the beauty of God's presence? It's natural to want to experience his closeness more often—as often as you can! As St. Josemaría Escrivá said: *“Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we never find Him.”*

We can help you discover and grow closer to God every day in your work, family life, and other ordinary activities. We want you to become a saint and everything we publish and do is directed towards that goal.

Thank you

Thank you for reading the booklet. Please feel free to redistribute the booklet to anyone who might benefit from it. **If you are interested in similar reading, see the related books below.**

