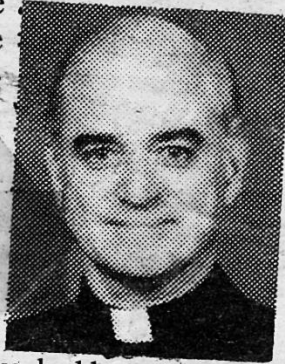


A Mighty Merge

God speaks to us in ways too subtle to describe. Without actually feeling His presence of hearing His voice we know He is there. When you have faith enough to sense His presence, responding to Him is relatively easy, if you keep it simple.



First, it's important to be yourself with God. Never force yourself to have pious feelings. If you're feeling blue, be blue with Him. If you're agitated or worried, endure the discomfort of it patiently. Moods pass in time. Accept your mood as you gently absorb His peace. Offer yourself to Him just as you are and smile. You can be sure He is smiling back.

SECOND, DO NOT worry about your lack of worthiness. No one is worthy of God's friendship. His smile does not depend on your perfection or your worthiness. He smiles at you because you are His little one; He knows you are still growing and He is infinitely patient.

His love is like the rain, falling everywhere the same. Each one of us experiences this gift in different ways. I no longer try to analyze it, I simply lift up my face and accept this gentle rain with gratitude.

It sounds almost too sweet doesn't it? Alas, religion is not all sweetness and light. Trying to surrender to the will of God can be an agony. Recall the crucifixion if you doubt me.

Whether or not you're succeeding at any given moment has no bearing on God's love for you. The shower of His love is constant. His eternal bliss descends upon you in times of misery and times of triumph, because God is unchanging love.

The good news is that one day righteousness and bliss will merge.

ter says that all we have to do is wait and be grateful. God's love is coming to us and when we are touched by Him, righteousness and bliss will come together.

This is the hope of everyone who has ever suffered for Christ and this hope is not in vain.

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HOWEVER, IN THIS life there are times when you will have to pay a heavy price for surrendering to God's will. Righteousness can be more demanding than you first suspect. However, the good news is that one day righteousness and bliss will merge.

This idea was the theme of one of the great movies of this decade, "Babette's Feast." This little cinematic jewel, made in Denmark, won the Oscar for best foreign film of the year 1988. It also won a Christopher Award.

A small community of austere Protestants, choking to death on their own self-abnegation, came into contact with Babette, a virtuous French woman, who in gratitude for their kindness prepares a stupendous feast for them. This love-feast awakens each to them to a higher level of perception as the bliss produced by legitimate sensual gratification leads them to the heights of heartfelt worship.

A toast is offered to God in gratitude for His love. In a great act of faith the toast

