



The Indwelling of God... Discovering the God Within

Most of us Christians, as children, were taught about the *Incarnation* - God breaking into the human story, being born to the Virgin Mary and taking on human form. Then we, in turn, receive God through the sacraments, as we're baptized, as we're given Holy Communion or the Eucharist, and when we receive the Holy Spirit during confirmation - at least that's how many of us have understood it. But, interestingly, according to the early Church, the word *sacrament* literally meant something sacred that's been concealed. So, what is it that's sacred, yet hidden from view? Might it be the "Indwelling of God"? God not just *dwelling in* everyone and everything, (implying that this sacred resident might leave if the abode doesn't measure up or some kind of heavenly lease is up) but **God as the actual core, imbued in all of us as the essence of life itself?** A presence we don't have to pursue, search for, or chase, because it's been there all along. The spiritual equivalent of not being able to see the forest for the trees. And the sacraments designed to point to or uncover this "sacred that's been concealed."

Why we Struggle to See God in All

Part of the problem is that we've been taught implicitly, and often explicitly, that we have to earn or bargain for God's love, and this creates a sense of *separation*. We feel that in order to discover God we must search far and wide and multiply many prayers and good works. The focus is on finding God outside of ourselves rather than discovering God within. This is sometimes called the "God and me" mentality - again, pointing toward distance rather than oneness.

In his book, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, Dr. Gerald May articulates this:

"As soon as we use the label "God" or "divine presence" we make an object of it, separate from ourselves.

Taken together, these reasons encourage us to dwell in the more comfortable, controllable world of "God and me," rather than the vague, vulnerable realm of "God in me and I in God."

Likewise, Fr. Thomas Keating said:

"The beginning of the spiritual journey is the realization; not just the information, but a real interior conviction that there is a higher power, or God. Or to make it as easy as possible for everyone, there is an Other: capital O. The second step is to try and become the Other: still a capital O. And finally, the realization that there is no other. You and the other are One: always have been, always will be. You just think that you aren't. "



It's clear that most of us hold the "God out there" view. Think about it - if we *really* believed that God dwelled within each and every one of us, would we continue to exhibit the kind of blatant disregard we often have for others? Would we be so easily able to judge others and cast them aside as "bad" or "worthless"? Would we amass resources when every minute another 15 people in this world die of starvation? Would we continue to be as hard on ourselves as we are, as unforgiving and self-loathing as we tend to be? The implications of truly

believing in the incarnation are huge. If we really believed it we'd relate to ourselves, others, and God's creation very differently.

Hunger and Thirst for God

But are we really ever far from our innate desire to experience our oneness with God? Maybe, unconsciously, we spend our entire lives searching for what's already there. ***We just displace and misname the object of our search.***

Just look around at the sense of vague discontent that's epidemic in our society. The compulsive need to strive, accomplish, achieve, excel, obtain, amass... it drives us to fill every minute of every day with intense busy-ness and anxiety. A better job, a bigger house, travel, the right car, clothes, toys, relationships...the objects of our longing seem endless. So often, once the object of our effort is realized, the satisfaction is fleeting. We're immediately filled with even greater longings, the objects of which become harder to obtain. ***Could it be that what we've really been thrashing about for is God?*** That this is precisely why we can never seem to fill the insatiable space inside us? As St. Augustine said, "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." Perhaps we're searching for something we've had all along - we just haven't figured out how to open the gift.

Beginning to Open the Gift

The Wisdom traditions of all faiths describe enlightenment as the discovery that the essence of life and love (God) lies within, and that the path to enlightenment or "oneness" involves letting go of the EGO or false self. This false self is the persona we painstakingly present to the world that's built around our accomplishments, self-definition, possessions, style, looks, our carefully curated image we display on social media - what modern culture often terms "branding." All of it disguising who we really are. Our concern with maintaining this false/EGO self becomes all-consuming and prevents us from getting in touch with our true selves - the selves we are in God alone. Beginning to recognize the ways we cling to

this false self is the first step toward uncovering the God within.

Next, a practice of meditation or centering prayer is the most effective way of learning, in tiny increments, how to let go of the EGO and the obsessive thoughts that defend our false selves, thus opening a small window through which we begin to experience our true selves in God.

Simple Ways to Begin

- Look for the good in others (the place where God is working), always remembering that we all have a story.
- Take time to observe the beauty in nature as evidence of the Sacred.
- Begin to notice the ways you "brand" yourself and the attention you pay to your public persona - these point to the false self or EGO.
- Try, in small ways, to let go of some of these EGO obsessions. Ask God to help you see that you are blessed without them.
- Explore meditation or centering prayer as a sacred exercise to learn how to let go of the unreal and uncover the God within.

Additional Resources:

[After the Diagnosis...A Guide for Living](#), Mariconda and Lynch, Chapters 3, 11, 16, 17

[The Way to Love: The Last Meditations of Anthony de Mello](#) - by Anthony de Mello

[The Universal Christ](#) - Richard Rohr

<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/>



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