



Who is God?

By Fr. Russell Becker, OFM

November, 2007

Dear friend of the missions,

Fall is in full force and perhaps all that is left of the summer are the leaves that many of us are raking up. November begins with the Festival of the Saints on the 1st. We remember our beloved deceased on All Souls Day the 2nd.

November 9th is the Dedication of St.

John Lateran. It is a good time to pray for the Church. November

17th is the feast of St.

Elizabeth of Hungary, a patron of the Secular

Franciscans. On November 21st, we celebrate the

Presentation of Mary in the Temple and November 22nd

is Thanksgiving Day. The Solemnity of Christ the King

is on November 25th. WE have much to be grateful for,

God watches over us with care. Pray especially for those

families that will not be able to be together on Thanksgiving Day,

especially because their loved ones are serving in combat. Pray for peace! All of us are grateful to you

for your kindness to the missions, we pray for you every day.

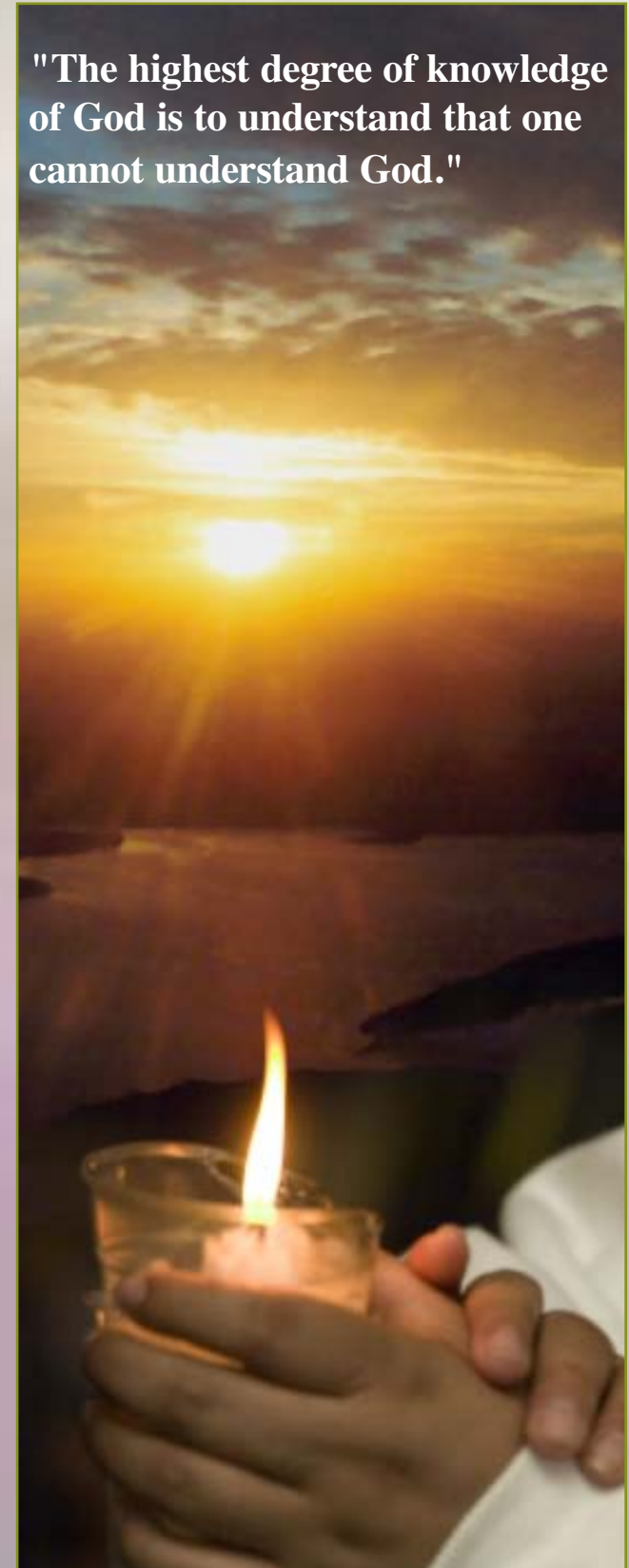


Who is God? Human beings from the beginning of time have been asking this question and trying to find an adequate answer. The answer which comes back over and over again is: **God is Mystery.**

The great theologians of our tradition have all arrived at the same impasse. It would be wonderful if we could come up with the perfect answer to the question. But the perfect answer to the question, "Who is God?," is "God." It is the God in whom we live and move and have our being. It is God who daily shows us a parent's love of whom St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, "The highest degree of knowledge of God is to understand that one cannot understand God."

Mystery is the object of contemplation, not the subject of human science.

"The highest degree of knowledge of God is to understand that one cannot understand God."





It is in prayer that we discover God, who in turn illumines the whole of life. The God who lives in "inapproachable light" shatters the darkness of our minds and hearts. But how will we ever really describe what it is like to be in the light? Knowing God consists in searching for and finding God. The great mistake we make is to confine God to human concepts and expressions. We always run the risk of trying to make God into our image and likeness and not believing that we are truly made in God's image. Knowing the God who is near, helps us out of that trap and opens to us all the mystery of life in God.

This knowledge enables us to say, "God is! How wonderful it is that God is!" This attitude of wonder is reflected in the prayers of the liturgy. All the creeds, all the definitions, all the attempts at answering the question, "Who is God?," are transformed into hymns of praise.

Images help us to be able to relate more intimately to the Mystery of God and help to produce deep confidence. Words tend to lose their meaning once they seek to touch upon this being of God. There is but one word which speaks sufficiently to the mystery of

God. That word is the Word of God, Jesus Christ. His message set the hearts and minds of the apostles on fire. They asked to know more about God, "Lord, show us the Father." The answer that Jesus gave them was, "Those who see me, see the Father."

Jesus also gave them more images that would help them to experience the true knowledge of God. The parables and stories about the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the banquets and weddings, the miracles which witnessed to infinite compassion help all of us to experience the depth of the Mystery of God; the depths which only silence and prayer can understand. Then, as Christians, we are brought together so that we can share our experience of the mystery and celebrate it with wonder and gratitude. When we share this with one another we support and sustain one another in the search to answer the question.

Our doctrine and dogma are necessary but they should direct and nourish the experience of the Mystery of God, not limit it. What we can and do say should lead us to praise and thanks and a realization that there is much we cannot even dare to say.

St. Gregory Nazianzen
sang of this experience of the Mystery of God.

*O you, the One beyond.
Is this not all that I can sing of you?
What hymn can speak the secret language?
No words can speak of you.
What can my spirit cling to?
No thoughts can contain you.
You alone cannot be spoken.
For what is said must spring from you.
All that is,
What thinks and what cannot think,
All praise you.
The world-desire, the world-sighing,
Moves toward you.
All being prays to you,
All thinking moves to you,
Your world sends up to you
A hymn of silence.
All that abides, abides by you.
All is in movement because of you.
You are the goal of all that is.
You are all being,
And you are none of these.
All names are yours, how name I you
Who alone cannot be named?
What spirit of heaven can pierce the clouds
With which your throne is shrouded?
Have mercy.
O you, the One beyond,
Is this not all that I can sing of you?*

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you been able to appreciate the presence of God in who we live and move and have our being?
2. Name some images of God that have helped you. Name some that have challenged you.
3. Are you willing to let go of some images in order to be open to God touching your life in new ways?

So we and many ask the question: Who is God? For all eternity the answer will be ever new, that is the Mystery of God.

Please pray for our missionary who celebrates his birthday this month:

Fr. Thomas Jones, O.F.M. (Brazil)

May the Lord bless him with peace and energy in his work!

Please remember our missionaries who are ill:

Fr. Aloysius Siracuse, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Charles Finnegan, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Bishop Benedict Coscia, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Ignatius McGeady, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Peter Sheridan, O.F.M. (Home Missions)

Fr. Arthur Murray, O.F.M. (Home Missions)

Fr. Clement Healy, O.F.M. (Jamaica)

Fr. Champion Lally, O.F.M. (Japan)

Fr. Stanislaus Widomski, O.F.M. (Japan)

Fr. Finian Riley, O.F.M. (Africa)

Bro. Rosario Vieira, O.F.M. (Brazil)

Fr. Robert Nee, O.F.M. (Brazil)

May God grant them health, peace and happiness!