

JOYCE RUPP

God's
ENDURING
PRESENCE

Strength for the spiritual journey

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Introduction

As I reviewed the reflections contained in this book, I noticed that quite a few directly or indirectly focus on the presence of God. This did not surprise me but it did reawaken me to how my awareness of the Holy One's nearness has claimed my heart. This dimension of my faith has nurtured and sustained my life since childhood. As I have aged, much has changed in both my external and internal world. One thing that has not been altered is my consistent experience of the enduring quality of God's presence. Through the joys and sorrows of my years, this abiding love remains strong and lasting. I cannot imagine my life without the treasure of the Holy One's steadfast companionship and guidance.

A long time ago, when I read the revelations of the mystic, Julian of Norwich, I resonated with her statement that "God is nearer to us than our own soul." Her belief in God's enduring presence was founded on her intimate closeness with divinity. In *Revelations of Divine Love*, Julian writes: "Our soul is so deeply grounded in God and so endlessly treasured that we cannot come to the knowing of it until we have first come to the knowing of God, who is the maker to whom it is joined."

This loving "joining" with our Creator sustains my life. Experience of God's presence happens in varied forms and times. One word or phrase from Scripture can leap out and draw me into spending time with the whisper of truth calling to me. In this brief moment of "recognition" I see that this stirring comes not from my human consciousness but from a deeper place

where Wisdom dwells within me. At other times, I am in conversation with a loved one, or sometimes with a stranger, and I become aware of a movement of kindness kindling my heart. Again, I have a sense that this Love is larger and fuller than my own.

I have known the presence of divinity in meaningful worship when I've gathered with others to sing a rousing song of praise or been deeply moved by reception of the Eucharist. I've especially been aware of God's companionship when I am in nature. Something as simple as the full moon rising or the sight of a fledgling bird learning to fly connects me with the Creator in an inspiring moment of awe.

Daily prayer and meditation are central ways in which I have maintained my awareness and gratitude for God's enduring presence. This is why I readily responded "yes" when first asked many years ago to write brief reflections on the daily Scripture readings for Creative Communications' *Living Faith* publication. My positive decision arose from a desire to help others grow in both attentiveness and appreciation of the Holy One's nearness.

The short essays found within these pages have been edited but they are basically the ones I've written for *Living Faith* during the past seven years. (A previous collection of reflections can be found in my book, *Inviting God In*.) As you use these reflections for your prayer, may they enrich your faith and draw you ever closer to our Enduring Presence.

Advent

I Need “Doses of Encouragement”

The
desert
and the
parched
land will
exult.

ISAIAH
35:1

Advent Scripture passages are marvelous messengers of hope. I enjoy this liturgical season more than any other. Each day these readings offer me a fresh opportunity to have my hope reawakened. I envision Advent as a time of allowing my spirit to soak in the scriptural promises and pledges. This season invites me to look around and notice how God moves amid my life each day as an advocate of hope through the positive people and encouraging situations I encounter.

During Advent I try to retune my attitudes, to see where I am stuck in life's obstacles and dissatisfactions. As I do, I uncover places in me that need a good dose of encouragement. In spite of my having a positive outlook, it's amazing how quickly life's troubles affect my spirit. Advent Scriptures daily remind me to regain my spiritual balance. Like a parched land exulting with new life or a deluge of rain causing a dry desert to bloom with flowers, my arid hope comes alive. I discover again that what I want to give up on actually holds the potential for future blooming and blessing.



God of Hope, seek out the places of my heart that are parched and dry. Refresh my spirit with renewed trust in your love.