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## JOY TO WHO SEEKS GOD!

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Who in his or her family has not met a brother, sister, or friend who was searching for God? Sometimes the leaden silence surrounding the presence of God is difficult to pierce. At times the Lord's footsteps are not nearly as visible as they had been in the past. Human tragedy has probably upset the easy faith of yesterday. Scientific discoveries have probably raised a thousand questions on the existence of God.

### AT THE HEART OF SUFFERING

One of the most famous professions of faith is surely that of Job. In his misery, he remains a man of faith and hope: *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and [...] in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."* (Job 19:25-27)

### AT THE HEART OF MISERY

In the book of Lamentations, the psalmist expresses his hope even when everything seems lost: *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore, I will hope in him.' The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."* (Lamentations 3:22-26)

### YOU WHO ARE BEYOND ALL THINGS

In the liturgy of the hours which the Church invites us to celebrate daily, there are beautiful hymns and psalms which speak to us of God. An example of this is the hymn attributed to Saint Gregory Nazianzen: *"O you beyond all things, is this not all that we can sing about you? What hymn can reach you, and what language? There is no word to describe you. What can the spirit grasp? You are beyond all intelligence. You alone are indescribable because all there is comes from you. You alone are unknowable because all that is thought comes from you. All beings, those with speech and those without, proclaim you. All beings, those with thought and those without, give you homage. The universal desire, the universal groaning is drawn to you. All that is prays you and to you every being that dreams your universe raises a silent hymn to you."*

### HOW TO NAME YOU?

And Saint Gregory continues : *"Everything that remains exists through you, and through you subsists eternal motion. You are the end of all beings; you are every being, and you are none. You are not one being, you are not their sum total. You have all names, and how could I name you, the only one who cannot be named? What heavenly spirit can penetrate the clouds which cover heaven itself? Have mercy on us, You who are beyond everything: Is this not all that we can sing about you?"*

## **YOU WHO ARE INDESCRIBABLE**

My nephew Rémi, aged 28, wrote the following meditation on God for a friend who was going through a difficult period of questioning :

*O you for whom I search haltingly and at times blindly,  
You whom I feel so present in all that is beyond me,  
You who light me with your sparks of bursting life,  
You who give me life in this fragile and precarious world,  
You the refrain of my joyful song,  
You the source of my questioning,  
You who walk by my side, faithfully, constantly,  
You my journey's end,  
You whom I would not seek if I did not know you existed,  
You who hear my thoughts and sing your silence to me,  
You who straighten my path along the desert of life,  
You who save me from drowning in excesses,  
You whom I describe at length because I cannot introduce you correctly,  
You who are so evident, omnipresent, omnipotent,  
How can I convince one of your presence in me when it is I who am in you?  
How can one point out water to seamen who could not recognise it?  
By letting them bathe in the fluid presence,  
By letting them drown in what gives them life,  
Because, as we discover life by contrast with death,  
It is your loud silence which cries out the flagrant response  
Of your resounding, dazzling, convincing presence.*

## **HERE I AM!**

As we end this reflection on God who is fully revealed in Jesus, I offer you a song which another nephew - Daniel, aged 28 - gave me at my episcopal ordination: "*Today I am before your face and turned to you, Lord my God, you my sweet Saviour! My soul thirsts for your presence, open the path before me and lead me to the living waters, come quench my whole being. My heart yearns to meet you, my footsteps forever seek you, I place my trust in you: grant me confidence. Before the ravages of life you are the rock to protect me; I place my trust in you, your open heart comforts me. Ready to cast off, I shall tell them: 'Good News!' And reassured that you love us, I shall sing out, Alleluia!*"

+ François Thibodeau

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Bishop of Edmundston

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