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- *Serving another is serving God*
- *Meet evil with compassion*
- *Recognizing the presence of God*

God is with each of you and speaks to you in God's own way so that you all may understand.

As you know, you all come to this point in your lives when you have many concerns and many reasons for rejoicing. God's response to you is personal and direct. There is no delay. It is immediate and always beneficial.

Indeed, these last few months have been a kind of roller coaster, demanding your exercise of faith through the recognition of God's hand in whatever lies before you. But it is also essential to recognize the function that you have in life serving as a hand of God. You may choose at any moment to reach forward, offering help, support, love by whatever means you wish to call it, or you may choose to hold back and wait, preferring rather to be passive. As God is never passive, you must also never be, for you must be a reflection of God's presence.

When you reach out in service to another, you are really serving God as well, for it is not just you who are the hand of God, but all others are the heart of God. When you serve another, you serve God. When you love another, you are loving God. You cannot devote your efforts towards the service of God by rejecting another human being, for you cannot separate that human being from God since all humans are in part divine.

As an example, the work one of you does with hospice is really her means of serving God. She's not required to do such work, but it is offered through a compassionate form of love. She serves as the hand of God, but she is also serving God.

There is no aspect in life, nothing that you encounter during your human existence, which is not in some manner or another a manifestation of God and of God's presence. Nothing exists without God. Nothing happens outside the view of God. When acts of evil take place, they are through the rejection of God, but God's presence is undeniable. The hand of evil is a rejection of the heart of God, but such rejection must only be viewed as the manifestation of a great need for the presence of God. Evil, therefore, can never be met by evil. Evil must always be met by compassion. It is compassion which encourages a thirst for God's presence in another.

When you are beset by those who are opposed to that which you seek and know to be in keeping with God's spirit, you must never judge but rather recognize that such opposition is merely a reflection of a lack of acknowledgment of God's presence. It is then up to you to help fill that void, for when that void has been filled there is no evil left.

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Sadness, you might say, is the absence of joy. Evil, then, is the absence of an awareness of God's light.

Notice we do not say "an absence of God," for that is impossible. It is only that one may choose to reject God's presence, to cover oneself from God's light. God's presence in life is not an abstract concept that is worthy merely of academic debate. God's presence is the direct result of your presence. Without other human beings, God's presence on Earth cannot be realized fully, for God's presence implies action. It implies a commitment to love, to the desire to serve, the ability to express and exercise compassion. Those traits are only seen or evidenced through human life.

Every person is necessary in God's creation because of the potential each has for reflecting God, bringing your knowledge into the reality of action rather than keeping it within the abstract realm of awareness. Awareness without action is empty; action without awareness is foolish. Both are necessary in order to provide a life of meaning and direction.

Your life is not the result of what you happen to be doing at any one moment. It is given meaning through the pattern which is described throughout a person's existence. For your life to have meaning, it must be experienced in service. You do not live to get; you live to give, and by giving you are loving, and by loving you are loved.

Life proceeds in two directions. At its best it is outward reaching, and it is always receptive to the reachings of others. You cannot live a meaningful life rejecting others—rejecting the needs of others, rejecting the offering of others. There is a sense of fulfillment when you give and what you give is actually received. Frustration occurs when you have much to give but it is rejected.

It is the same in the other direction. In order for another's life to have meaning, you must be receptive to what another offers. By accepting the love offered by another, you are strengthening the love which is being offered, and you are in turn being strengthened, for your capacity to love is significantly enhanced by the love you have received. A young child receives love, and its result is the capacity to give love. A child who does not receive love is incapable of offering it. It must be experienced to be given away. The mutuality of that relationship is unmistakable to all of you.

Life is to be shared, to be given, to be offered through compassion as a sense of peace, a security, a sense of direction and focus. What you have to offer, therefore, indeed has much bearing on the lives of others. Peace in the world really does begin with the peace that you feel and therefore the peace that you offer. If you cannot feel peace from within, you will be incapable of giving others that gift.

It is essential, therefore, to seek out ways of identifying God's presence in your lives. That presence is not seen just in momentous events, but is more often witnessed in the smallest of gestures. It may be an expression on the face of another or in the eyes. It may be a touch. It may be just the presence of someone willing to be nonjudgmental, just being there. It may be the beauty of nature on the grandest scale

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and of the minutest detail. The evidence of God is all around you. You have only to open your eyes and take it in.

When you feel secure in the knowledge that God is indeed in your life, you will feel only peace. You cannot experience anxiety and God's presence at the same time. Peace is the only feeling which results from God's presence, and it is from that peace that you are able to experience real love. You cannot be expected to sense this peace every day and every moment of every day, for it is fleeting. But if you allow yourself the luxury of looking for God around you, you will be more successful in recognizing God's presence, and the peace that you seek will become more firmly rooted in your experience.

God's love is for each of you and is constant in all ways. It is our pleasure to reflect that love to your souls and to see your souls respond in the knowledge of that reflection and in the warmth of God's presence. And now we bless you all with God's peace and light.

Amen.