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- *Hearth metaphor in giving and receiving light*
- *When dispirited, pray for others*
- *Souls grow through faith*
- *A spiritual triangle*

God surrounds you individually and as a group joined here and as a wider group including those for whom you pray. We rejoice that you have found time to join together in a search for a closer walk with God. Each of you has your concerns, matters which cause you worry and sadness, but these concerns are also accompanied by aspects in your lives which give you joy and comfort. In life there is always a balance. The relationship between that which causes sorrow or worry is not always equally balanced by that which gives joy. But neither is life full of one with complete absence of the other. When you experience joy unbounded, be thankful but don't lose sight of others who are experiencing darker times in their lives.

Search for ways of sharing the spiritual strength which accompanies your joys with others. You are all aware of that strength. When you rejoice, you feel physically stronger as well. You have greater energy, and somehow the manner of life around you is bright. There is a kind of aura to your experience of life. This glow or brilliance is never permanent, but it contains a great potential for helping others. You will understand if we say that real joy is not fully realized unless it is shared with another. Each of you experiences pleasure in telling others of an event which has given you this positive radiance. It may be something major in your life or a matter which simply illuminates your day. We say this glow is not permanent.

The light, the radiant energy which you emit, is much like that emitted from the hearth. It flickers, it is strong, and then may be dimmed. As long as there is sufficient heat and a spark, there is the potential for renewed light. There are many who surround you daily whose lights are dim and who need a spark. When you are in a condition of strength, of inner joy, be it outwardly visible or felt as a sense of peace, you then have the capacity to shed your light to those in need. When you experience anxieties and depression, you are in need of the light from others as reflections of God's light. There is a strong interdependence implied in this principle. You have a responsibility for giving light to others, and this is balanced (occasionally unevenly) by your need to receive light from those around you.

There is an axiom that in giving, one receives. You cannot directly demand that others provide you with sustenance when you are down. But you can put into operation efforts on your own part which will draw light from others. When you feel discouraged, downtrodden, or sad, search for ways of helping even one other person. Though you feel you haven't the capacity or energy to reach out, if you pray for God's strength, you will be shown a direction or manner for you to move outward. In so doing, you will

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receive the light of comfort which will illuminate your darkened hours, for although everyone faces discouragement and occasional feelings of helplessness, there is always a spark present. That spark is your spiritual being, and its power to maintain itself comes from God.

All of you on earth are interdependent. No one is totally alone. No one who asks God for healing grace is totally in darkness. The two responsibilities, sharing your light and seeking light, are essential to following a life directed according to God's wishes. In fulfilling both responsibilities, your souls advance in their development because both actions require you to reach out to another. They are both selfless giving.

It is impossible for us to overemphasize the importance of prayer in your exercise of these two responsibilities, for prayer is the most important method of offering help to another. It is difficult for you in the earthly phase of your existence to recognize the follow through property of prayer. It is easier to offer your help to another directly, for you are present to observe both your giving and the other's response. Offering help through prayer is a giant leap through faith. You have no fail-safe visual guarantee of that help reaching its destination and you are generally unaware of the other's response. You can accept this principle only on faith. Your souls grow in strength in proportion to your capacity to be accepting through faith. It is the most difficult test that you must exercise in your lives, for there is seldom that confirmation, that sense of achievement of knowing, which is so much a part of the human condition.

As you exercise those responsibilities towards others from the position of your own condition, remember that no matter how high or low you feel, you are never left without the capacity to pray for others. It is a power which is available to all because it is a function of the soul. Rather than be centered on your own conditions, shift your attention and concerns to another through prayer. When you are down, you will receive strength, and when your spirits are high, you will be reminded of the kinship of humankind.

In each outpouring of prayer you are directing your souls' energies to God to be reflected to those for whom you pray. You stand as part of a spiritual triangle: God, yourself, and others. When the communication between these three points is open and strong, there is a peace which indeed "passeth all understanding." You are all members of this triangle. No one is completely severed, and the strength of its unity is dependent upon the awareness of each for the other.

We bless you with the grace of God who surrounds all who turn to God and their fellow human beings in prayer.

Amen.