

# God Is Always Near



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The stanza numbers in this text correspond to the articles of the *Catechism* on which the text is based.

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## Introduction to the Theme of This Booklet

For people of faith, nothing is more important than to understand that God dwells within us and we dwell within God. We are religious precisely because we seek to walk daily with God and to hear God's voice as it echoes in the depths of our souls. In fact, we believe that we are created as sons and daughters of God—God is always with us. So, coming to understand the presence of God helps us grow in faith and live as children of God. It's our only way to live with happiness.

But, of course, how do we know God is real? How can we see or hear God? We're in luck! Through the centuries, God has helped us understand that all love flows from and returns to the divine heart. In a word, *God is love*. Our faith allows us to see this, but there are also plenty of clues in the world and in the people around us. When we listen to the message of creation and the voice of our conscience, we can be certain about the closeness of God.

## ROUNDTABLE LEARNING

In roundtable learning, everyone in your small group sits in a circle with a designated leader. Everyone is a teacher, and everyone is a student. Move around the circle, reading the stanzas aloud from this text, rotating readers.

## ROUNDTABLE SHARING

Because faith development happens at the intersection of understanding and sharing, the stanzas of text are interspersed with similar groups of questions meant to introduce sharing. As your group reaches these sharing questions, the process of moving around the circle continues except that, instead of reading a stanza, each participant shares from his or her heart about the material being treated in that lesson.

Begin with a simple pause to remember that the Holy Spirit—the sacred source of all wisdom and love—is with us as we gather.



### The Inborn Hunger for God

27 The human heart is filled with longing.  
No matter who we are or where we live,  
no matter how rich or poor we've become,  
no matter to whom we're married,  
or not married at all,  
no matter what,  
we hunger.

And for what do we hunger?  
When we pause to consider this,  
in its magnitude and power,  
we realize that we hunger  
for that One who made us.

We hunger for the divine heart.

We hunger for God.

This desire for God is written into our very hearts,  
because we're created by God and for God.  
God never ceases to draw us to God's own self.

Only in God will we ever find  
the truth and happiness  
for which we never stop searching.

Our dignity as humans rests above all  
on the fact that we are called  
to this communion with God.

This invitation to be near God,  
to talk with God,  
to hear God's voice echo in our own souls,  
is addressed to us

from the first moment of being.

The truth is that we believe something very profound  
about human life.

We believe that we exist because human life

*This desire  
for God is written  
into our very hearts,  
because we're created  
by God and  
for God.*

is an expression of divine love.  
Likewise, only through God's love  
do we continue in being.

We believe that we must acknowledge God,  
acknowledge God's love,  
and give our very hearts over to God  
for us to achieve happiness  
and fullness of life.

But how does this desire to be near to God  
play out in everyday life?  
How do we know that it is, in fact,  
a desire for God  
and not for something or someone else?

28 In many ways throughout history  
we have expressed our desires  
in words and actions.  
We have sought quiet moments of prayer.  
We have engaged in forms of sacrifice.  
We have developed rituals and liturgies.  
We have found ways to express  
our inner being  
by reaching beyond ourselves  
to "another being."

We give that "other being" a name,  
and that name is  
Holy One  
Spirit Counselor  
Wonder of Wonders  
Father of All  
Great Spirit  
Mother of the Earth  
or, in a word, God.

Looking even casually at history  
and how we have behaved,  
it is easy to see that we are "religious beings."



And even though we have searched continually  
for God down through the centuries  
and even in our present day,  
God, it turns out,  
is really quite near to us.  
For in God, as the Acts of the Apostles reminds us,  
"we live and move and have our being."

29 Even though God is so near to us  
and we to God,  
we sometimes forget this key to love.  
We may focus on the riches of this world,  
or allow indifference to overtake us,  
or remain ignorant about our deep desires,  
or follow a bad example,  
or ignore God's invitation,  
or even outright reject God.  
Perhaps most insidious of all,  
we may even try to hide from God  
in fear and shame.

30 God, however, does not abandon us,  
or reject us,  
or shift the divine focus of attention.  
God is always near:  
always.  
God calls us to seek the sacred heart,  
to find life and happiness.  
And on our part, our human part,  
what is required of us?  
Simply that we respond to God,  
that we allow ourselves to be loved,  
that we place ourselves in such a place  
that we can hear the voice  
of the Holy One  
which echoes constantly  
in our depths.



31 For those who do seek God  
 with a pure heart and deep desire,  
 there are specific ways of coming to know  
 the Divine Source of Life.  
 There are ways of approaching God,  
 of *seeing* God.  
 These make us confident of God's existence.  
 We can't prove that God is there  
 in the same way  
 we can prove something in science.  
 But we can see with the inner eye,  
 hear with the inner hear,  
 and touch God in our own hearts.  
 And in this, we can be sure:  
 God is always near.

### GROUP OR PERSONAL PROCESS

*How do you sense that you are on a "journey of faith"?*

*How have you experienced intimate closeness with God?*

*How do you experience God's nearness?*

*Briefly share the story of your faith journey, beginning with your birth and ending with the present situation of your life. Share about the people who introduced you to faith, taught you, were models of faith, and stood by you during significant turning points that have occurred through the years.*

### How Can We Be Confident That God Is Near?

#### *We see the world*

32 First, we can see the world.  
 From the first glimmer of life,  
 that shining opulence amid the chaos  
 that surrounded the earth,  
 the Divine Force of Creation  
 has been at work.  
 And as the Spirit hovered over that chaos,  
 holy order emerged.  
 However the first hundred million years  
 of earth's history unfolded,  
 we believe the hand of God was present.  
 Saint Paul wrote of this in his Letter to the Romans,  
 where he said,  
 "What can be known about God  
 is plain to [us]  
 because God has shown it to [us].  
 Ever since the creation of the world,  
 God's invisible nature,  
 namely, eternal divine power,  
 has been clearly perceived  
 in the things that have been made."  
 And Saint Augustine observed in one of his sermons  
 that the beauty of the earth itself  
 is a profession of faith.  
 For even though such beauty is subject to change,  
 the Maker of such beauty is not.

