

WE NEED GOD!

A STRANGE THING to say, no doubt, but God really is important. True, God is important in God's self, as the Almighty One. God is the First and Last, the Supreme Being—not as highest on some graduated scale, but as transcendent, utterly Other. God is supremely important as God. This we know and wonder at. But God is important for us, and therefore we are invited to respond with all *our* being.

Our experience of the world in which we live makes us realize how important God is for us. The world can be a very ugly place and without God and what our faith tells us about God we would find it very hard to cope. How people manage without faith is beyond my comprehension. The Scriptures are filled with the most reassuring teachings about God's love, God's concern, God's support, and the extraordinary gift and privilege that is ours to be called to be God's children—to be part of God's family.

You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God' (Rom. 8.15-16).

If we have some faith and awareness that God is always near no matter what is happening then we are far better placed to face the world and all that goes on in it.

At present there is plenty to lament about the world we live in. I hesitate to make a long list because it would be too depressing. One has only to watch the evening news broadcasts to be aware of the ugliness. People can be so brutal to other people. The global economic crisis, reported to have been caused by greed, is real and near at hand: our St Vincent de Paul group reports a tripling of the number of calls for assistance this year. The marginalisation of Aboriginals continues to shame our nation,

as does the wide-spread culture of binge drinking, drugs, and other harmful behaviour. But most shameful and distressing of all is the predatory behaviour of clergy and religious that has so badly harmed many young, vulnerable people. The revelations of sexual abuse seem to be never-ending and the damage inflicted is incalculable. Apologies, saying sorry, seem so feeble.

In the days of my relatively care-free youth I used to take issue with the words of the prayer 'Hail Holy Queen': '...to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping, from this valley of tears'. Now that I know a little more about the world and the way it runs I am less inclined to dismiss the sentiments the prayer expresses.

The world we live in can be a valley of tears. It can be very ugly, and the present moment might tempt us to send up our sighs, mourning and weeping, to Mary and the whole court of heaven.

However, weeping and mourning pure and simple is not the Christian way. St Paul tells us to rejoice even as we weep and mourn: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.' (Phil. 4:4.) And he warms to his theme: 'Have no anxiety about anything' (v.6). St Philip Neri 'was outstanding for...joyfulness in the service of God' (Prayer of the Church for the Feast of the saint, 26th May). And Philip had many reasons to weep and mourn in his times.

How can we weep and mourn and rejoice all at the one time? St Augustine, as he so often does, clarifies things for us: 'The Apostle tells us to rejoice, but in the Lord, not in the world' (Sermon 171.1).

Our faith in God enables us to hope in a new day that is dawning for all those who weep. We need to thank God for being God! Without God life would be hell.

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