

God Experience Meditation



Time: 2nd meditation on Die Day

Length: 25-30 minutes

Speaker: adult

Purpose: The principle focus of this meditation is to lay before the youth the experiences of an adult who has worked through many problems in sustaining an awareness of God in his/her own life. The presence of faith in youth today cannot be taken for granted. The Gospel is perceived only as one option among many; and it is not perceived as something which elicits a full personal response. They do not easily perceive the Good News as credible. In order to enable them to be open to an act of faith, we invite them into the mind and heart of an adult who shares with them in intimacy and honesty.

This meditation, given in a very personal way, charts the successes and failures of a mature adult to attain and sustain a faith vision in his/her life. It is hoped that, as they come to believe in the person sharing life with them, this meditation could be a breakthrough into the main stream of the Christian life. The life of the adult in his/her "walk with God" should serve as a reference point for trust and hope in the Gospel message about to be presented in the Paschal Mystery Meditation. This meditation is designed to make the faith credible.

Setting: The candidates, having been welcomed and gathered in community, have listened to one of their peers describe life as he/she found it at this time in their life and, having witnessed the ceremonial enthronement of Scripture, they are now in expectation as to what comes next in their weekend experience.

This meditation dovetails with the sharing of the youth in the Growth and Ideals Meditation. In that meditation, the youth invited the group into the intimate heart of the presenter's life as he/she struggled with meaning and purpose in his/her experiences. That meditation did not open up the religious question: the faith dimension of life. It simply says: "This is how life is at this time as I experienced it."

Now, an adult lays down his/her track next to that of the youth's experience and says in essence, "This is how I have found it to be, through reflection and experience. I have come to sift out my life experiences and have found the need for God in my life." The meditation gives a panoramic vision of how the life experiences of an adult came together in various encounters with God. It also sketches, indirectly, how the adult worked through sham experiences, but the main thrust of the talk is on the positive side.

The meditation could be entitled: My Journey of Faith. It shares not only the peak experiences of the presence of God, but also the times when God did not seem very real or seemed totally absent. Even those times when the adult experienced a "loss of faith" should be included. Unless the candidates see both the light and shadows, they will not get the full picture.

The meditation should be given in story form. It should not in any way moralize, although it can state sincerely that the moral dimension of faith is something the presenter learned to value. It must not, in any way, appear to be preaching. It is not a direct attempt to challenge them to believe. Rather, it is

the soft sell, in a sense. It is not just stating one's life convictions. The speaker, by his/her sincerity in living the faith, and by the honesty and integrity of his/her sharing, should win a hearing in the youth present, and cause them to reflect on their own life and its meaning in this context. The faith story should be told with joy, humor, sorrow, regret, and all the other normal human responses.

The story should stress how faith is not something that is conveyed through things, but rather primarily through personal relationships. One could almost say that one's personal history of salvation is the history of encountering God's loving presence by all other persons.

The framework of how our "God image" changes through our stages of human development can well serve as a background for the reflection of the speaker in preparing this mediation. How our envisioning of God changed from childhood through young adolescence and later adolescence, and with the coming of adulthood, can be woven into the context of the faith story.

Outline:

Scripture: (1 Cor. 13: 11-12) *"When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and think like a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known."*

Scripture: (Ephesians 4:13-16) *"Until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming. Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love."*

1. Introduce yourself and speak of the family environment into which you were born
 - a. All through life, the persons who love us tell us who we are
 - b. Relate stories from childhood in which you sensed you were someone of value
 - c. Share the religious attitudes of the home and the parents faith experiences or lack of them
 - d. Share how your relationship with other persons had an influence on your sense of the sacred.
2. Relate how you perceived God as a youth in grade school.
 - a. Recall your experience of first Reconciliation and First Communion
 - b. Speak about "life crises" in someone whom you cared for and how it affected your perception of God
 - c. Speak about how you perceived God as the law giver who kept accounts
 - d. Recall persons whom you felt were holy
3. Relate how your image of God changed as you entered high school.
 - a. Recall how the attitudes of your friends affected your relationship with God
 - b. Recall how music and films affected your image of God
 - c. Share your feelings at Confirmation
 - d. Share some of the doubts that entered your mind from time to time.

4. Share any faith crisis which you experienced
 - a. Share times in which God did not seem very real
 - b. Share times in which a sense of God's presence was a peak experience
 - c. Share how relationships with others aided you in interpreting your experiences
 - d. Share how love, or loneliness, affected your perception of God
5. Share how the presence of God came home to you in the midst of life crises.
 - a. Blaming God for things that made you suffer
 - b. Breaking out of your suffering and seeing God as friend
 - c. Nurturing your faith through prayer and worship
 - d. Conviction that God is bigger than life, but very close to each one of us
6. Faith is a growing, an unfolding, a becoming.
 - a. Faith is a personal relationship with a personal God
 - b. Faith is learning that my relationship with God also tells me who I am. My faith stance gives ultimate meaning to my life
 - c. Give examples of persons who have great joy and peace because they walk in God's presence
 - d. God's glory is the human person fully alive. A complete human person, as God has designed us, is one who lives with a faith vision
 - e. Faith grows, and diminishes; like the rings of a tree, each level or lack of it creates the faith patterns of our life
7. Questions for discussion:
 1. How did you relate to the faith story of the speaker?
 2. When did you feel close to God?
 3. When did God seem far away?
 4. Have you ever experienced God in another person?