

Changing Images of God

Our image of God is greatly influenced by our relationship with our parents, religious leaders, and authority figures

God is mystery—beyond our limitations

We share in this mystery—we are unique and each of us have a different way of perceiving God (story of 5 blind men and Indian elephant)

We are all making the same journey as human beings but the route is different for each one

There are guidelines given to us within the Church, through Scripture and the teaching Tradition, but ultimately we must find our own way and we are responsible for our own journey

Often our image of God is inadequate or distorted

Intellectually we may understand God but emotionally we react differently (Mk 5:1-20)—attraction and repulsion of God

We are a people of conflicting desires, feelings and attractions—we must learn to embrace and listen to all parts of us otherwise we will project it onto others through Judgementalism

Like Jacob (Gn. 25-35), we must trust our own experiences of God; our treasure lies hidden in the field of our experience

Our image of God changes over time as we mature in life; no one image or symbol captures all of God

Who is God for you? What image(s) best captures God's presence for you?

We get rid of old, inadequate, incorrect images of God through prayer, Scripture reading, study, reflection on personal experiences

Some examples of toxic beliefs, superstitions, and false gods

We get healthy images of God from Scripture, nature, Jesus, our imagination, and our experience of life

These images are symbols, we hold them lightly, we do not believe in the images themselves; rather we see through them

If we do not see through them, they can get in the way and restrict our vision/experience

Images can become idols not only when they are interpreted literally, but also when they cease to speak to a changing culture

Our images of God and ourselves are intimately connected—as one changes, the other one does as well

Toward a life giving Christian spirituality Thomas Hart, *Spiritual Quest*

1. God wants life for us
2. The purpose of our life is to learn how to love
3. Where the action in our life is, God is present and active
4. God does not send us pain and suffering, but works with us in them for good
5. The paradigm of death and resurrection is key to understanding our existence
6. The spirituality of marriage lies chiefly in fidelity to the dialogue
7. God often appears in human form
8. We are neither naturally good nor naturally evil, but immensely malleable and ultimately responsible for our own becoming
9. God's will for us is found within our own deepest wanting
10. Good people are in danger of being destroyed by their own goodness

Imaginary prayer—imagine your resentment, sadness, anger going over the cliff with the pigs