

## Reflections on God's Love and Presence

The central theme of these reflections is discovering God's creative, unconditional, and faithful love. To do so, we must first recognize our need for God. Often, we avoid acknowledging our failings, yet the most significant failing is closing ourselves off from God's love. This separation leads us into areas we call sin, but it is precisely in these places that transformation occurs, drawing us closer to God. With humility, we reflect on God's creative ways of reaching us—especially through nature—revealing His desire to heal and be intimately present in our lives.

The greatest expression of this love is found in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus, inseparable events that define our faith. As we journey toward Bethlehem and celebrate the new life of the Christ child, we are reminded of the story's ultimate destination: His death and resurrection, which proclaim hope, joy, and love.

Experiencing God means receiving His presence and allowing His self-communication to come alive within us. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux teaches that God is life and power; when He enters, He awakens the slumbering soul, stirring and piercing the heart. We perceive God's presence through the movement of our hearts. The transcendent God becomes incarnate among us, His presence mediated through both inner and outer realities. As God's touch awakens us, we encounter Him more concretely in life and in the world. The deeper we respond to His presence, the more integrated we become—living expressions of Saint Irenaeus's insight: "*The glory of God is a person fully alive.*"

*Excerpts from Maureen Conroy, R.S.M., D.Min*

Read the readings "ponder." Take one or two or any of these scriptures, over a few days, and listen to God's words of love to you. You can look these up on your phone or in any Bible. Don't rush; these are just suggestions to help begin your journey.

Isaiah 43:1-7 Consider "how does God see me?"

Psalm 63:1-4- flip this around and hear God say these words to you.

Psalm 139:1-18 God's loving gaze in tenderness is always upon me.

Psalm 104: Can you marvel at God's creation, including you!