

## The importance of visualization

Over the past few years my concept of God has changed. The popular view of God as a male father figure who exists separately from us is not at all accurate. It is an imperfect way of visualizing a spiritual being who is neither male nor female and has no physical body. Everything that exists is infused by God, including us. We actually share God's divine, spiritual nature. There is no nook or cranny in this or any other universe where God does not exist. The physical world in which we live is also spiritual in nature. There is nothing physical about it. The basic building blocks of the space-time universe in which we live are nothing more than vibrating strings of potential energy which continually blink into and out of existence. The physical bodies we inhabit are also spiritual in nature. We are spiritual beings created in the spiritual image of God. As part of God's creation, we are one of many vehicles through which God expresses Himself.

This being the case, how does one visualize and relate to a non-local, omni-present, invisible, God, who is so much bigger than any image that we can conjure up? Is there any value in visualizing God as a human father figure who lives in a place called Heaven, as depicted in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples? Is there any value in viewing God as a "person" who is separate from us and who does not indwell us until invited in, as in Revelation 3:20, where Jesus, who is the incarnation of God, stands at our heart's door asking to be let in? Is there value in visualizing God in the form of the historical Jesus, who told us, in John 14:7, that seeing Him was the same as seeing the Father? Is there any value in visualizing Jesus as a rather handsome and kindly appearing bearded man in a white robe? Is there value in visualizing and experiencing God's presence through liturgical objects, including the bread and wine of the Eucharist?

I will try to answer that question with an analogy from secular life. Napoleon Hill once wrote an extremely influential book, called *"Think and Grow Rich."* The idea is that if you are able to create and continually focus your attention on a visual image of something you desire to accomplish or achieve in life, you have the power within you to achieve it. It is amazing what can be accomplished through the power of visualization. It has been scientifically verified, for example, that basketball players can improve their shooting accuracy without even picking up a basketball, merely through a process of mentally shooting baskets. The Bible does say, in Proverbs 23:7, that *"as a man thinks, so is he."* Throughout the Scriptures, especially, in the teachings of Christ, the power of faith is continually emphasized. The process of visualizing a desire or goal and continually meditating on it, through spoken and unspoken prayer, is very effective. I personally believe that the Spirit of God dwells within us, and at the deepest level of our consciousness we are inseparable from God Himself. This being the case, it is not surprising to me that visualization can be a creative process with almost unlimited potential.

Why does God reveal Himself to us imperfectly through images that only convey partial truths? My answer is that there are no words or images that can fully and accurately describe the indescribable. As Paul said, in 1 Cor. 13:12, *"for now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."*