

Seeing & Believing

Reflections for Faith

A Devotional Journal

**Photographs and Text by
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FORWARD MOVEMENT
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Dedication

I dedicate this book to all the amazing people who provide daily images and reminders of God’s glory, including those mentioned in these pages, especially Victoria, Claire, Rebecca, and Jacob. I also dedicate this book to John Graves, a student in my “Explorations of Theology” class at Saint Catharine College, who encouraged this project from the beginning.



Introduction

This collection of images and meditations provide a starting point for reflections of faith. New faith calls for new images of faith. We may discover images that speak deeply to us, beyond our understanding, allowing us to experience and share more fully the truths we know but can't quite put into words. These images can be "snapshots" of meaning for us. Our imagination is especially a place of grace where God meets us and we meet God. Images of faith can stir our imagination, renewing and transforming us. Even a glimpse of transcendence can change us. Imagination connects our everyday life to the transcendent and holy beyond ourselves.

Images can also provide a way of sharing faith and deepening theological understanding. We can "do theology" through images and the reflections prompted by them. It's a way of knowing. We may discover that some images touch us deeply, engaging us in ways we can't explain and helping us know the truths that the images make visible. And we may share these images with others to help them see insights or to share an understanding that could be difficult to relate in other ways.

Each image in this collection is followed by a reflection, and then questions to encourage active imagination and connect the image to personal experience. Each set extends an invitation to deeper seeing and believing.

Let these images and reflections stir up new ideas and ways of being. Write your thoughts and prayers in response to the pictures and words. Draw your own images on the blank pages in the back of the journal. Keep your own snapshots, drawings, or special reminders in the folder at the back. You may use these reflections on a weekly basis or as a resource during a liturgical season or a time of your life. You determine how this collection may best strengthen your journey. I hope these images and words will reflect the "gracious light" among us, and assist your seeing and believing. — *Rob Slocum*

*Lord, we love thee, always be
in our hearts and minds to see
all our gifts have come from thee.
Lord, we love thee, help us see.*

*Lord, we love thee, nearer be
never let us fail to see
every day we walk with thee.
Lord, we love thee, help us see.*

*Lord, we love thee,
constantly
filling all our hearts to see
life and hope will come from thee.
Lord, we love thee, help us see.*

Arrows

One summer our church hosted Reading Camp, a week-long event for third and fourth graders in the local area. It met in the parish hall, behind the church, so Victoria, my wife as well as the camp director, chalked large blue arrows on sidewalk squares, all leading to the parish hall. The arrows helped the kids find their way to where they were going. Later that week, there was a torrential rain, and it washed away all the arrows, without a trace.

But the camp went on. By then, everyone knew the way. The arrows were gone, but their direction was still with us. It was a busy and great camp. And I was tired after we finished on the last day. That night I went to bed early, and in my own twilight between sleeping and waking, I could almost hear the sounds of the kids' voices one more time. Then I woke up completely and found myself in a darkened room that was absolutely quiet. But the life of the camp and the kids' voices were inside me. The outward sign was gone, but its energy remained. In me.

Everything we do in the church is meant to point beyond itself to something more. Nothing is for its own sake—not the fellowship, or the organization, or the budget, or the liturgy, or the building. They're all arrows that point beyond themselves. They point to love that will be with us when all the arrows are gone.

Do you see the arrows? Where do they point you? How do you feel when they disappear? What's your direction now? What will you do?

Monkey Trap

Some trappers in South America seek to capture monkeys without harming them, to take them to zoos and such. So they take a large gourd and empty it on the inside, much as we might empty out a pumpkin to make a jack-o-lantern at Halloween. They carve a small hole in the side of the gourd, making an opening that's just big enough for the monkey's paw. Inside, they place some tasty nuts that the monkey will love to eat

and then secure the trap. When the monkey arrives, he slips his paw into the gourd, and it just fits. But when he closes his paw on the nuts, he's trapped! Of course, the monkey can leave at any time. All he has to do is let go of the nuts, and he's free to go. But he doesn't want to do that! He wants the nuts. So he'll stay there with his paw in the gourd until the trappers arrive to take him away.

Sometimes we trap ourselves by our unwillingness to let go. We get stuck and can't take the next steps. We hold on to something that's really gone, unavailable, or inappropriate—maybe it's a time of life, a way of thinking, or an ended relationship. We tie ourselves down

in ways that prevent us from living the life that's available right now. No amount of discussion or explanation will really make a difference. We just need to let go and move on.

If your hand isn't open, you can't receive a gift. There's no room if your hands are full. If your hand is closed, you may turn away a friend or someone who could be a friend. And certainly, as Indira Gandhi says, you can't shake hands with a clenched fist.



