

January 14, 1983

- *The challenge of love*
- *Perceiving God*
- *God is experienced through love as a choice*

God is with each of you as you are joined together spiritually in your search for greater understanding of life, God's presence in life, and the purpose of your life on earth.

Love is a wondrous experience: it is intense and it consists of so much variety. There are moments in each of your lives when love brings joy as well as pain, and love soothes and challenges. Life is in many ways weak, and occasionally it is meaningless without challenge, but the challenge is a part of love, and its presence in your lives need not be one which brings pain. It is an experience which encourages growth through thought and consideration. You are challenged to grow closer; you are challenged to be understanding; you are challenged to be patient; you are challenged to persevere in what is important in your lives. You are challenged to put yourselves within the position of another, understanding another's life.

All of this is a part of love. It is not an easy relationship and is not meant to be. The presence of love never implies the absence of challenge. You may say you love another, but unless you are challenged by another, the love carries with it little potential, for love is not merely an acceptance of what is but a willingness to change, become flexible—in short, to become another.

You say you love a neighbor or a stranger or God. That means more than just being accepting; however, acceptance is important. When you love a stranger you are challenged by that person in the sense that you are being asked to accept that individual fully, strongly, and with complete conviction in the other's total equality, in the other's divinity, in the other's right to respect and compassion. It is not enough merely to say I love a stranger because there is no threat. Your love requires action on your part, an attitude to be formed and held onto which reflects your perception of God's attitude of you. That requires effort and thereby the challenge.

Peace is a challenge, and peace comes through love. It does not simply exist. It is not a state of mind but a state of action. Love is not a state of mind, a numbness or willingness to be accepting. It is a commitment of intent. God loves all of humankind, not just because you exist, but because in a sense God has chosen to love all humankind. We have said frequently that God is love. If God *is* love, how can God *choose* to love? It is an apparent dilemma with no logical explanation. The truth is that God's commitment to love is so total that as a result God *is* love.

When individuals are dedicated to the pursuit of an objective, they are identified very often by that pursuit. Some may be labeled as artists; that is because they pursue art. They choose that pursuit and are thereby identified by it. The reality of God is not

January 14, 1983

quite so simple, but the truth can be recognized in such analogy. God is a power. If you pray, God responds. God is order and logic. The universe exists because of God. In understanding God, one can only experience God through specific manifestations. There are those who are not orthodox in their sense of God as love, and yet they sense the order of God in the universe around them. For them, God is order and logic, and their experience of God is through such manifestation.

There are many who have no scientific orientation whose experience of God is through love. God is both these things. It is difficult for you to perceive the truth of the statement that God is as you perceive God. The difficulty of accepting this in no way changes the facts of its reality. There are those who perceive God as a great judge, as the ultimate arbiter of good and evil. For those, God is that judge, but for others, God takes a different form. The perception of God which is closest to your experience collectively is of a peace and a sense of love, and it is to this perception that we speak today most strongly.

It serves little good for us to transmit to you a perception of God which has no meaning for you individually. To describe God as a kind of spiritual entity having no dimensions and yet being everywhere is difficult to bring down to personal terms to which you may relate. Therefore, God for each of you must be a personal God. Your experience of God must be personal. It cannot be a theoretical construct; it has to be concrete for you relate to God through concrete perceptions. You may not see God, but through your senses you see evidence of God. God is love, yes, but perhaps more significantly, God is experienced through love. That is more to the point, for it brings with it the assumption that the experiencing of God is a matter of the will. You experience God through love. You must choose to express that love and to witness it. You might choose to ignore it, but your perception of God through love is choice.

Our responsibility as your guides is to encourage you and lead you in the exercise of that choice to experience love. That is what gives meaning to your lives. That is the source of eventual peace. If you want peace, you must be challenged to choose love. You must be willing to work for it and with it and because of it. You work for love. You work with love, and you work in your lives because of love. Without that love your work ultimately has no purpose. The work of which we speak may be a vocation, it may be an attitude or a way of dealing with others, but it is the result of challenge, of being called or being asked to act through love.

We pray that you respond to the challenge of love. We pray for your sense of peace which is achieved only by your response to the calling of love. We pray for your perception of God as a loving influence in all life. And we pray that you shall always experience a sense of challenge, not complacency, that you be motivated to move forward toward God, not merely to stand still in the hope that God finds you. We pray that you will be drawn to others and not expect others to be drawn toward you. We pray

January 14, 1983

that the life that others lead will provide glimpses of God and divinity that will serve as examples in your lives.

Be strong in your concepts of what you want God to mean in your lives. Live those lives as a reflection of love from God, and serve as a challenge to others that they may elevate their lives in the search for the exercise of love.

Our prayers for you are of love. Our work with you is through love. God's light is indeed around each of you. God's light is a challenge for each of your lives. Rise up and respond and rejoice in that wondrous presence!

Amen.