

## The Otherness and Closeness of God

*Which of the following hymns speak to God's "beyondness/otherness" (transcendence)? Which speak to the "closeness" (immanence) of God?*

Eye has not seen, ear has not heard  
What God has ready for those who love him;  
Spirit of love, come give us the mind of Jesus,  
Teach us the wisdom of God.  
To those who see with eyes of faith,  
The Lord is ever near,  
Reflected in the faces of all the poor and lowly of the world.

**"Eye Has Not Seen," Martyr Haugen**

Holy God, we praise thy name!  
Lord of all, we bow before thee;  
All on earth thy scepter claim,  
All in heav'n above adore thee;  
Infinite thy vast domain;  
Everlasting is thy reign.

**"Holy God, We Praise Thy Name," Ignaz Franz**

Holy, Holy, Holy! All the saints adore thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,  
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

**"Holy, Holy, Holy!" Reginald Heber**

Not like a torrent or storm;  
not like an ax on a tree trunk;  
not like a shot in the heart, does God deliver his word.  
But like a gleam of the sun, like a green twig in the winter  
Peeping above the hard ground, such is the Kingdom of God.  
Men melted down into peace, children and those poor in spirit,  
These hear his name in their hearts; they bear his words in their flesh.  
Here in our dying each day, we learn that we can believe him.  
We become people of God; love now decides life and death.

**Huub Oosterhuis**

## What's the Meaning of All This?

Is there some meaning to this life?  
What purpose lies behind the strife?  
Whence do we come, where are we bound?  
These cold questions echo and resound  
through each day, each lonely night.  
We long to find the splendid light  
that will cast a revelatory beam  
upon the meaning of the human dream.

**Dean Koontz**

How do I experience the restlessness and longing, which is ultimately a yearning for God?

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In what areas of my life does this yearning express itself?

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Do I push away, ignore, or suppress this fire within me, or do I find ways of honoring it? How?

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What activit(y/ies) embod(ies/y) my deepest longings and keep(s) me hungering for meaning?

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## “What Is the Meaning of Life?”

Once, and only once, I asked that question and got a serious answer. . . . It came from Alexander Papaderos, founder of an institute dedicated to human understanding and peace, in Greece.

One summer at the institute, at the end of a two-week seminar on Greek culture, led by intellectuals and experts in their fields, who had been recruited by Papaderos from across Greece, Papaderos rose from his chair at the back of the room and walked to the front . . . He turned and asked, “Are there any questions?”

So I asked, “Doctor Papaderos, ‘What is the meaning of life?’” The usual laughter followed, and people stirred to go.

Papaderos held up his hand and stilled the room. . . . “I will answer your question.” Taking his wallet out of his hip pocket, he fished into a leather billfold and brought out a very small round mirror, about the size of a quarter. And what he said went like this:

“When I was a small child, during the war, we were very poor and we lived in a remote village. One day, on the road, I found the broken pieces of a mirror. A German motorcycle had been wrecked in that place.

“I tried to find all the pieces and put them together, but it was not possible, so I kept only the largest piece. This one. And by scratching it on a stone I made it round. I began to play with it as a toy and became fascinated by the fact that I could reflect light into dark places where the sun would never shine—in deep holes and crevices and dark closets. It became a game for me to get light into the most inaccessible places I could find.

“I kept the little mirror, and as I went about my growing up, I would take it out in idle moments and continue the challenge of the game. As I became a man, I grew to understand that this was not just a child’s game but a metaphor for what I might do with my life. I came to understand that I am not the light or the source of light. But light—truth, understanding, knowledge—is there, and it will only shine in many dark places if I reflect it.

“I am a fragment of a mirror whose design and shape I do not know. Nevertheless, with what I have I can reflect light into the dark places of this world—into the black places in the hearts of men—and change some things in some people. Perhaps others may see and do likewise. This is what I am about. This is the meaning of my life.”

And then he took his small mirror and, holding it carefully, caught the bright rays of daylight streaming through the window and reflected them onto my face and onto my hands folded on the desk.

***From It Was on Fire When I Lay Down on It by Robert Fulghum***

- What “light” do you think Dr. Papaderos is reflecting?
- Where do you think Papaderos finds God?
- What does this story say to you about how you could be living your life?

# The Elephant

Once upon a time, a king was perplexed over stories of a strange beast roaming about his kingdom. The king knew that the creature was called “Elephant,” but he knew little else, so he called his four closest advisers to court for a council. All four were quite old, quite wise, but also quite blind. After lengthy discussion, the four advisers decided to find Elephant, examine it, and then report back to the king.

After a long search, the advisers came upon Elephant, who readily agreed to be examined. The first adviser laid his hand upon Elephant’s trunk. The second chanced upon the beast’s side. The third grabbed hold of Elephant’s leg, and the fourth adviser happened upon the tail. Satisfied, the four advisers thanked Elephant and returned to court to give an account of their findings.

The first adviser said, “Great king, Elephant is a snakelike creature, thin at one end, thin at the other.”

“Pardon, sire,” interrupted the second adviser. “Elephant is no snake. Rather, it is a huge, living wall that is able to move about at will.”

“Is that so?” questioned the third adviser. “I think not! The creature cannot move at all. It is round, thick, and firmly planted like a tree.”

“Not at all!” declared the fourth adviser. “Elephant is a small and twitchy ropelike animal.”

The king sat open-mouthed. “What am I to believe?” he shouted. “Four of my most trusted advisers have come to me, each with a different story. Which is true? Who can truly reveal the identity of this astonishing creature?”

Later, when learning of the king’s appeal, Elephant made this decision . . .



Match the numbers to the letters in the key below to fill in the blanks and discover Elephant’s decision.

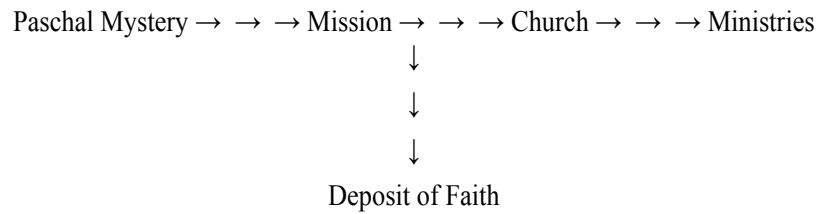
Z	Y	X	W	V	U	T	S	R	Q	P	O	N	M	L	K	J	I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A
7	12	22	19	24	3	11	2	13	21	8	26	16	20	4	25	10	6	15	9	17	23	1	18	5	14

“ \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ .”



## Sharing the Faith



### ***Sacred Tradition***

- ▶ The living “handing on” of the Good News
- ▶ Worship
- ▶ Doctrine

### ***Sacred Scripture***

- ▶ The written form of what the Apostles handed on
- ▶ Library of inspired writings
  - Old Testament: 46 books
  - New Testament: 27 Books

### ***Magisterium***

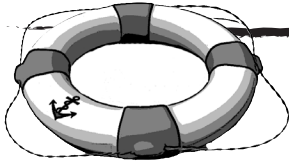
- ▶ The pope and bishops—successors to the Apostles

**God makes the deposit.**

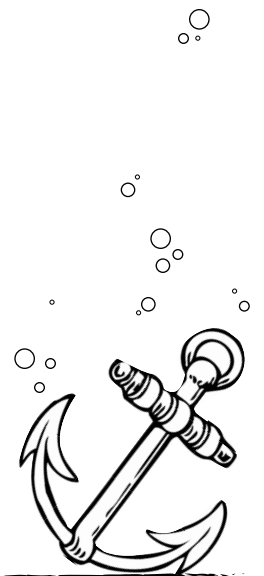
**The Magisterium preserves and hands it on.**

**Everyone in the Church is a shareholder in the treasure that is our faith.**

# I Think Faith Is More Like . . .



	<i>Column 1</i>	<i>Column 2</i>
Hanging On	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Letting Go
A Lifeline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> An Anchor
Easy Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Metal
A Sprint	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> A Marathon
A Comfort	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> An Adventure
A Question	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> An Answer
A Lion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> A Lamb
A Long Shot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> A Sure Thing
A Hard-Earned Win	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> An Easy Surrender
A Search for Truth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Truth Discovered
Bright Sunshine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> A Thunderstorm
Apple Pie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pizza Pie



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Faith Alive

Faith makes it possible for us to accept Jesus as Lord.

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Faith makes it possible for us to share in the life of the Holy Spirit.

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Faith is a gift from God, but our response to faith must be freely given.

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Faith is reasonable.

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Faith is certain yet seeks understanding.

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Faith and science are not enemies.

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Faith is like a muscle. If not exercised, it will dwindle away.

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Abraham and Mary are two models of faith.

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## Faith-Filled Sayings

Look over these sayings concerning faith. Underscore the one that speaks best to you. Or find a different saying that speaks to you and write it in on the lines below. Be ready to explain your choice.

Unthinking faith is a curious offering to be made to the creator of the human mind.

**John Hutchinson**

Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible.

**Mary McLeod Bethune**

Faith is a bird that feels dawn breaking and sings while it is still dark.

**Old Scandinavian Saying**

Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservations.

**Elton Trueblood**

To one who has faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without faith, no explanation is possible.

**St. Thomas Aquinas**

Faith is for that which lies on the other side of reason. Faith is what makes life bearable, with all its tragedies and ambiguities and sudden, startling joys.

**Madeleine L'Engle**

Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

**Martin Luther King Jr.**

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Praying the following Act of Faith regularly is a sound way to exercise your faith and enable it to grow.

### **An Act of Faith**

*O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three Divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; I believe that your Divine Son became flesh and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths the Holy Catholic Church teaches, because you have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. Amen.*



## Marks of the Church

***“We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.”***

### ***The Church is ONE.***

The visible bonds of unity are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Ephesians 4:4–6
- 1 Corinthians 10:17
- John 17:20–22
- John 10:16

### ***The Church is HOLY.***

How would you describe someone who is holy?

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Holiness = our birthright and our vocation.

- Genesis 1:31
- Leviticus 20:7

The vocation to holiness . . . is the perfection of charity. Holiness is the greatest testimony of the dignity conferred on a disciple of Christ and the basic charge entrusted to all the sons and daughters of the Church.

**Pope John Paul II, 1996, *The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People, On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the World* #16**

### ***The Church is CATHOLIC.***

Explain what you think “catholic” means.

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The term “catholic” was used first by St. Ignatius of Antioch (c. AD 100), who wrote:

Where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic Church.

*Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8:2

## ***The Church is APOSTOLIC.***

Because . . .

- It is founded on the Apostles.
- It passes on the Apostles' teaching unchanged.
- It continues to be taught, made holy, and sanctified by the Apostles' successors (the bishops).

## ***Discuss***

- How can we champion unity without becoming narrow-minded?
- How can we begin to make it easier for people to believe because of the goodness of our lives, because of our becoming more like Christ?
- How can we break down the barriers that divide us so that everyone feels welcome?
- How can we be apostolic—people sent—to those hungry for good news?