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- *Being confident of God's presence*

God joins your souls together in a strong bond, a closeness.

You can feel God's presence in the peace which you experience at this moment, but it is our desire that you feel God's presence even within the hectic pace of daily living. This is not easily accomplished, for often you are caught up in pressures, decisions to be made, others to deal with, concerns for health of others, concerns for your own health, and the meeting of normal deadlines which are a part of living. How then in all of this activity can you feel fully connected to God's presence? You relate God's presence as peace, and when your lives are not peaceful, how do you feel that presence? The answers to this dilemma are complex, but vital for each of you.

You cannot pull away from those activities completely. When others demand your time you cannot say, "Wait, I am not ready to respond." No, a sense of God's presence is actually the result of a knowledge of that presence achieved at another time, an earlier time. That is why these meetings, these gatherings are so important, for they provide you with an opportunity to know. That knowledge ultimately becomes a part of your daily living, and it can, in its way, become nearly a habit that whatever you are doing, however secular or material, you are doing in the knowledge that God is in your life, just as children can play in a house with great intensity at a game or with a toy, and yet all the while in the comfort of the knowledge that their mother or father is there.

Just as young children need the assurance of the presence of a parent or another who is loved and trusted, so you must interact in life with the knowledge of God's presence. At a very young age, they sense the presence of the parent only when they see that parent. As children become older, they sense that presence even when the parent is out of sight. It is only important that the parent be nearby.

In your early spiritual development, you are aware of God only in those moments when circumstances bring you close, personal, intense need for God. You are, in fact, a spiritual child. When you see direct evidence of God's presence, you believe God is present. When you do not see direct evidence of God's presence, you find it more difficult to accept that nevertheless God is with you. Part of the measure of spiritual development of an individual is the ability to feel the presence of God without necessarily seeing direct evidence of it, just as the child feels the presence of the parent without directly seeing. All individuals make such a stride in their spiritual growth at different rates.

Part of our function in joining with you in your gathering is to help the transition of your faith in God's presence, to move from the position of recognition through direct means to recognition through a confidence in God's presence. You may not consciously think at every turn you make daily that God is with you, but in a very real way your

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awareness of God's presence colors and influences your response to all that happens around you, whether those events happen to you or whether they happen as a result.

Each of you may be fully assured that your current development spiritually enables you to be involved intensely in the living of your lives while yet being simultaneously aware of God's presence and guidance within those lives. Certainly, we cannot say this level of development is true for all people. But you have been given much information over the years, and you have had numerous opportunities to ponder the details as we have transmitted them to you—the information you do have of the reality of God's presence—and therefore it can be said that you all can live a life which is normal and active and yet is with the full recognition of God's involvement.

You may recognize in principle God's involvement and yet not see evidence of it, but that evidence is not necessarily immediately recognizable. You must look back over a period of time—it may be weeks or months or years—reflect upon those large segments of time and look for patterns. Try to find a thread of destiny, if you wish to call it that, which is responsible for bringing you to where you are at this point. There is a continuity. You are not where you are by accident. You are where you are by choice and by the participation of God, whose presence is most strongly apparent through invitation and not through some sort of automatic presence.

The perspective which you have in viewing the past will readily indicate hard evidence, definitive evidence, of God's presence, and that should give you confidence that although the future may be uncertain, you may still proceed knowing of God's presence even though you do not necessarily see it. If you recognize this reality, you must also accept that God is a part of all lives. Your prayers for others as well as yourselves serve to strengthen God's influence, but God is there. God is there in children who do not recognize God. God is there for those adults who are spiritual children. No favorites are played. There is no chosen group that God stands with at the expense of another. That presence is constant.

Yes, it is difficult to sense God's presence every day under all circumstances, and we do not expect you to achieve that level of awareness. But it is not too much to expect you to know God's presence is constant, and to recognize in retrospect that God was there all along. This should give you confidence in the future. This should provide strength for the present and it should allay fears of what may lie ahead. So much unnecessary energy is spent worrying about what may happen. The future will come—the future will become the present, the future will become the past—all in its own time. Worry has no purpose. It has no function. It has no influence on what shall transpire. Only prayer affects the future. Only prayer gives meaning to the present. Only prayer gives recognition of God to all that is past.

You are so fortunate to be sharing in so many insights. It should give you great confidence, and you should feel uplifted from the burdens of worry and uncertainty, and you should be able to move forward with complete knowledge of God and God's

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influence on each of your lives. Recognize the reality of God's light when you can see it. Have faith that light shines when you cannot see it, and never cease to recognize the presence of that light as you look back upon your lives.

God's blessings of love and warmth and light are our blessings which are bestowed on each of you. Your lives are rich and vibrant and strong. Rest in that knowledge and be fortified by all that you have learned.

And now we bless you in God's name and with God's love.

Amen.