
The Mystery of Faith

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

Believe it or not, I do still have discussions with people who profess not to believe in God. Obviously, I realize such discussions occur all over the place; but one would think that most of my own conversations occur with people who profess some religious or spiritual belief – people whose lives touch mine in and around the community of faith that is the Cathedral of St. Philip.

But I thrive on conversations with people who do not have a history with Christianity or the Cathedral. I enjoy those conversations – conversations which touch the heart of spiritual searching and wonder. When discussing the existence of God with someone who does not believe in God, the question I often ask is different from: Do you believe in God?

Instead, the question I ask is: Do you believe in Mystery? And then: do you believe in The Mystery?

Well, one might ask, what is “The Mystery?” I believe, somehow, that “Mystery” exists. It is the power behind every scientific theorem, and behind every self-giving act of love. The Mystery is the rhythm of energy that moves and flows in and around all life.

Classical philosophy, and Saint Thomas Aquinas, wrote of a “First Mover,” whom one might name as God. By whatever name, however, that first mover was Primal Energy itself: the first force of life in the world, the power, the attraction (and also the repulsion – in terms of self-differentiation) that, piece by piece, assembles what we experience as the world today.

The small phrase, “mystery of faith,” appears only once in the Bible, rather insignificantly, as Saint Paul is describing how a deacon should act: “Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience” (1 Timothy 3:8–9).

But Saint Paul provides a fuller description of “The Mystery” in the Letter to the Colossians: “God’s commission that was given to me [was] to make the word of God fully known, the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations but has now been revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known ... the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:25–28).

The mystery, says Saint Paul, is that Christ is in us, the hope of glory! I believe in Jesus Christ, of course, but I also believe that The Christ is in us, that The Christ is that power of God, that moving energy of God, which is in each and every one of us.

In our Sunday service, in Eucharistic Prayer A, we say: “Let us proclaim the mystery of faith: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.” Wow. The mystery of faith is that Christ is in us. The mystery of faith is that we live our lives according to the mystery of Falling and Rising, Death and Life, Dying and Living, taking Bread, breaking it, and giving it away.

There is glory in this rhythm, and there is deep love in this rhythm. For me, that is what belief in God is. It is not so much an intellectual assent at all. It is a realization that I am empowered by this rhythm, and by connecting daily to this rhythm

of death and new life. The rhythm, the pattern, can be found and described in all sorts of ways; for me, the Bible and the Christian tradition describe it. The Christ, which is the incarnational energy of God, is actually in me. Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

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