

Sharing our testimony

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I will start by asking myself this question: Does the language I use to address God in my prayers alter my idea of God?

“Seigneur” “Notre Père” “Mon Dieu” : My parents taught me to love God as a Father who loves us and looks after us . My human father was doing all those things so it was easy to grasp. Their engagements in the life of our Catholic Church in Lyon and their strong faith were so encouraging. My first communion at the age of seven followed by the more solemn ceremony at the age of twelve were normal and expected events in my life. I remember the preparation for this communion with a sense of taking part in a great event which deepened my desire to grow into a “good” person. I was helped to think for myself and discuss the purpose of following Jesus in various retreats and reflection groups.

I remember a priest, Père Clerc, whose modern ideas stirred me to question and to argue the Church’s teachings and purpose: perfect for a teenager eager to start an argumentative discussion with her parents about the rôle of the Virgin Mary, for example. The understanding and tolerance I met then, helped me through years of decision-making at school and university.

My numerous visits to England introduced me to an English version of God “The Almighty”, “My Lord”, “Our Father” and a different denomination; all sharing the same faith with a different way of worshipping with fewer symbols but more hymn singing. When I spent one year in Bradford as French Assistant in a school, I often relied on God’s help to find my words, to be as good as possible with the boys I was teaching. Perhaps, I called upon the father figure of my childhood God “Mon Père” as a comforting Father Head.

I want to believe that my destiny was to meet a Yorkshire boy during that year in Bradford. God has been and still is the guiding light in our married life.

It is hard to remain aware of God’s deeds and nudges in our busy life. I try to see him in creation, in a friend’s smile, in a sudden thought which make me alert to someone’s need at that moment. I also like to imagine God at my side, giving me a discreet nudge or putting a comforting hand on my shoulder.

My “faith picture” is a long sinuous path leading to a bright light, a light so striking that we will only fully comprehend it when we reach the end of the path.

I thank God that his hands have always been stretched out to me when I experienced sadness, ill health, worries, despondency. God’s hands are made visible through the caring and service of each one of us.

To expand on my “faith picture” as mentioned above, I imagine a network of similar paths each born from a different culture or even a different set of beliefs but all converging to that Light for the love of God and the Good of all people on earth.