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CREATED FOR GLORY

"You will show me the path of life, fullness of joy in Your presence. In Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps 16: 11). We address God in the words of Psalm 16 with gratitude that we have been called into being, called forth to glorify and to be glorified.

That you were created established a contract with your Maker, one set up from eternity when you were designed according to a precise plan. You were marked for existence. Selected to be and to be who you are, different from every other creation of God's. The love of the Almighty reaches down through eternal ages, an everlasting love rejoicing in the particular instant of time when you would be conceived in your humanity and then brought forth for God's delight and for your own.

Our Creator does not form us and then abandon us to our own devices. God does not withdraw to a far-away divine plenitude, leaving us to make our way forward on our own. The author of the Epistle to the Ephesians celebrates what has been accomplished by divine wisdom: "Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing. Before the world was made, God chose us in Him, to be holy and spotless before Him, to be full of love...that all might praise the glorious favor He has bestowed on us in His Beloved" (Eph 1:3,4,6).

We are chosen, not randomly, but chosen in Christ to live through love in the divine presence. This presence of our God, focused on you and on me, is abiding, permeating our existence at every moment, continuing to call us forth into glory and ever greater glory. We have the assurance of Jesus: "I have given them the glory You have given to Me." (Jn 17:22)

Glory is a word that conveys many meanings and many levels of meaning. In an ordinary down-to-earth sense, it is simply reputation, renown and fame. An athlete, an actor, a politician, a scholar, a businessman or woman, as long as personal success continues, draws attention. The flashing glitter of publicity pours over such a one. A dazzle from outside themselves.

But the glory given by God is a light from within, a splendor that glows as an inner radiance of our being, luminous with a hidden transcendence. This is the glory of God that Revelation speaks of when the eternal city is described. "And the city did not need the sun or the moon to shine upon it, since it was lit by the glory of God"(Rv 21:23).

This glory of God has overshadowed us since the beginning of our human life. From infancy through childhood, we grow in awareness of all that is around us. Some of us are blessed to learn from our elders about this God Who shines from on high into our small

personal world. A child's understanding in these early years of life is simple but very deep. It is a time when the awesomeness of contemplative consciousness can take root, as spiritual writers have pointed out.

Today so often we pile up a passing parade of objects to occupy children's attention. Their senses are inundated with variety. But why not invite these blessed youngsters to a quiet walk, letting them get used to simply taking in the enchantment of sky and earth, not filling the time with talk? We open up a gate of wonder to children when we invite their expanding perceptions to move into wide spaces, stilled and filled with the marvels of human existence.

Our postmodern American culture tends to offer fast food for body and for mind. It is mass-produced and slick. And our 2003 American culture is becoming a dominant culture for the world, full of advertisements to stir up appetites. We are inundated with images, multiple images. One giving way quickly to another. We get used to an ongoing bombardment of the senses.

Images of God contend with all the other media-produced images presented to us for pleasure, diversion, entertainment. In such a culture, people are easily bored--not only with religion but with everything else. Over-stimulation leads to early satiety, to ennui.

But God's call to us would have to be very weak indeed if it were thwarted by our easy access to other contenders for human attention. No culture can be so powerful that it overcomes divine grace. If that were so, the reign of God would have been overthrown long ago.

However, we are called to make choices. In choosing, we have the assistance of grace, the always-present divine gift to help us make the most of each moment. During these January and February days with below-freezing temperatures, we often want to stay longer in a warm interior space. Looking through a window at our Maine snowscape, we feel the pull of quiet grandeur. Winter prayer has its own special poetry of frozen beauty. Let us choose to relish the wonder as the moments move onward. God's glory within us and outside us is illuminating our being.

In his desert journey, Moses asked the Lord, "Let me see Your glory." And the answer came, "I will make all My splendor pass before you" (Ex 33:18,19). This is the reply God gives to us these frigid days when we turn to Him in a longing that is assured of fulfillment. New England winter is not just Brrr. It is also Ahhh.

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