

# Sittin' In the Lap of God

Many years ago I interviewed my ninety-seven-year-old aunt – the senior member of the church at the time.

“Aunt Annie Marie,” I asked, “What is your most cherished memory of being in church as a young child?”

Without hesitation she gave an excited response, “Sittin’ in Miss Flossie’s lap!”

“Did you also have Sunday School in those days?” I inquired.

“Oh yeahhh,” she replied, indicating its great importance . . .

“And who was your teacher?” I asked, awaiting her response of “Miss Flossie.”

“Well, what do you cherish most of that experience,” thinking it might have been her favorite Bible Story. She gave me a quick cute smile as if to say – “I know good and well what I’m saying” and then repeated with emphasis, “Sittin’ in Miss Flossie’s lap.”

Lap sittin’ awakens beautiful memories of moments of peaceful belonging and makes us wonder if it might represent a shadow of memory when we did “sit in the lap of God.” Genesis (1:27) reminds us that we are “created in the image of God,” the same God that the Psalmist says has “knit us together in our mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13). The Lord speaks personally to Jeremiah (and to each of us) saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you. (Jeremiah 1:5)

If God knew us – did we also know God? If we once knew – is there a faded memory of this relationship that is more accessible to very young children and perhaps others who maintain that childlike openness? We see this in the saints, mystics and sometimes, ordinary people around us – especially those who are brought to the edge through disability, suffering, illness or trauma or some kind.

There is an old adage that says, “Religion is for those who are afraid of Hell – spirituality is for those who have been there!” Perhaps when we are stripped of our human resources, reserves and relationships we are more open to the spiritual dimension that has been hiding inside of us all along – interior secret hiding places that the child instinctively knows. Jesus gives an invitation to his disciples and to us to find this spiritual dimension through being a “servant to all,” by emptying oneself out, and becoming the last.

This innate knowledge of God, seemingly natural for children, would seem to be the driving force that calls the adult into a life long search homeward. Only to discover that we are the ones being searched out. Again the Psalmist tells us, “O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down (in God’s lap?) and when I rise up.” It is a two-way quest best described by Saint Augustine, “Thou has created our hearts for thee O, Lord and our hearts are restless ‘til they find rest in Thee.”

So restless and hungry are these young hearts that we sometimes see the children running ahead of the rest of us to be with Jesus at the altar. Perhaps in a voice not audible to the rest of us - they hear his call, saying, "Let the children come." There he sits at the Banquet Table every time we gather for the Eucharistic Feast. Is it not their desire to come as honored guest to sit in his lap?

**Look at some of the "lap sitters" at your church. What do you see?**

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