

Making God Real

When Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī used to come here in the mornings, he would frequently remind us of how blessed we were to be in Śivānanda Āśram. This was said from experience. As he was constantly traveling throughout the world, he was frequently reminded of what a haven of peace this Āśram is.

The visitors who had come from the world would agree with Pūjya Swāmījī, but unfortunately many of us who had been in the Āśram for a longer period of time had become somewhat jaded. We had begun to see the weaknesses of the Āśram. We had got caught up in our own problems, and, as a matter of fact, our attitude to the Āśram was little different than the average person's attitude to the world. We were full of our likes and dislikes.

Pūjya Swāmījī wanted us to see our situation from another angle of vision. He wanted us to appreciate how fortunate we were. That is not nearly as radical as Saint Paul was. He wrote, "In all things give thanks, for it is God's will for you." In other words, he was saying to the people he was writing to that no matter what the tragedy in your life, no matter what your difficulties are, give thanks for them, for it is God's will for you.

Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī's remarks about appreciating how lucky we are to be in Śivānanda Āśram seem very reasonable compared to the extreme position that Saint Paul took, but they are both driving at the same truth. The truth is that underneath all our desires, resentments and worries, we are at peace. There is a dimension of us that is ever the participating witness in the life process. We get caught up in the process itself and react to it with likes and dislikes. We are so absorbed in what we want and what we don't want, that we totally lose sight of this deeper dimension.

Pūjya Swāmījī wanted us to appreciate the circumstances we are in, to take our minds off whatever difficulties we are having and see the blessings. Saint Paul wants us to give thanks for everything, because that too changes our inner angle of vision. It shifts us from seeing the difficulties to appreciating the underlying beauty and holiness of all life.

We talk about making God real, realizing God. We first have to wean our minds from their absorption and fascination with what we think is right

and wrong and rest in the goodness that is always there. Then we become more like God,

Appreciating what we have and giving thanks for those things we don't like are a very real step towards our goal of making God the reality of our lives.