

# How God Speaks to Us

For Christians, Scripture and the Church's liturgical rituals are important ways we hear God speaking to us, but there could be many others. This is a list of some of the other ways God may be speaking to us subtly, and beyond words, according to Joe Paprocki, the author of *A Church on the Move*.

**In Thoughts.** In response to our prayer, God may be inviting us to pay closer attention to a thought that continues to rattle around inside our head, perhaps for no obvious reason.

**In Memories.** It is not unusual for God to stir up memories from our past in order to speak to us about something going on in the present.

**In Feelings.** Prayer does not always result in a good feeling; however, it is important to pay attention to any feelings that stir up within us when we are praying. God may give you a feeling of peace and contentment to remind you of his presence, or perhaps a feeling of restlessness to stir you to action.

**In Hopes and Desires.** At times, God speaks to us by stirring up hopes and desires within us. We may simply find ourselves more aware of a particular yearning. When people say that they are "going with their gut feelings" they often mean that they are following an inner hope or desire.

**In Dreams.** God has not given up on the notion of speaking to people in dreams. In *Dreams--God's Forgotten Language*, author John Sanford encourages us to pay attention to those images that come from within our unconscious self and to look for clues as to what God might be saying to us. It's important to know that dreams are not meant to be taken as literal messages from God but are vehicles for getting in touch with God's movement deep within us through symbols, concepts or deep emotions.

**In Nature.** At times Catholics are suspicious of this notion of hearing God speak to us through nature because we fear entering the realm of New Age spirituality or the ancient, yet always prevalent heresy of pantheism. Catholics do not equate nature with God, but we certainly believe that nature possesses God's fingerprints and that it reflects God's presence, goodness, strength, power and beauty.

**In Experiences.** God's message for us may be wrapped in an experience we have just been part of. Reflecting on our experiences is an important way of recognizing what God may be saying to us or asking of us.

**In Personal Relationships.** Throughout Scripture, God used people as his mouthpieces and God continues to do so. Each day, God speaks to us through other people's words and actions. By paying closer attention to the people we live with, work with, work for, serve, or just play with, we may hear God speaking to us.

**In Encounters With Beauty.** Beyond nature, God speaks to us through any experience in which we encounter beauty. This includes music, drama, literature, athleticism, art and more. Beauty provokes feelings within us, and very often those feelings are part of a wordless conversation with God.

If some all of this seems a little strange, Paprocki says, picture yourself on a porch swing with someone you love. "You don't necessarily have to be speaking words with that person in order to feel as though you are making a connection with him or her. You can just sit there quietly, swaying back and forth, perhaps holding hands, and experience intimacy without saying a word." "In the same way," Paprocki concludes, "our connection with God often takes place beyond words."