



March 8, 2022

Connecting Through Jesus

By The Rev. J. Randolph Alexander, Jr.

Several months ago, my spiritual director suggested something to me that has captured my imagination ever since. We were talking about my late father, how much I miss him, and how I wonder sometimes what he might be doing now, in the nearer presence of God. We also talked a bit about things left unsaid and undone.

He then said to me, "You know, your only connection with your father now runs through Jesus."

I had never thought of it that way. It was one of those moments where someone says something so direct, so clear, and in such a matter-of-fact way that it can catch your breath.

His statement assumed so much.

It assumed that there is an afterlife, and that connecting to that afterlife is possible, and available. It assumed a level of faith on my spiritual director's part, and on mine. And it assumed a role for

Jesus that I have long accepted and believed, that Jesus is always praying for us to the Father.

As the epistle to the Hebrews says: “Consequently he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Yet I had never considered how it would make reasonable sense that Jesus could also serve as an intermediary to connect us to loved ones who have died, to pass messages to those who have gone beyond the thin veil that separates us.

My spiritual director suggested that I try asking Jesus to convey my gratitude to my father, my missing him, and my love. This seems strangely new to me, and I am giving it a try.

It also occurs to me that this may be an enormously underutilized option for all Christians. We certainly believe Jesus longs to hear our prayers, and that the Holy Spirit helps us in our prayers, given that we don’t even know how to pray as we ought, but “that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words” (Romans 8:26).

Isn’t it just possible that, as our conversion deepens and our lives go on, we could ask Our Lord to convey to those loved ones now in God’s nearer presence our learnings, our ever-deepening appreciation for them, even our pleas for forgiveness and reconciliation? And might this be an important part of our own ongoing healing and spiritual growth and development?

I have long thought we are only beginning to scratch the surface of the blessings that accrue to us through our relationship with Christ. Might this be yet another? I encourage you to pray and think about it.

Almighty God, who hast promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in thy Son's Name: We beseech thee mercifully to incline thine ear to us who have now made our prayers and supplications unto

thee; and grant that those things which we have faithfully asked according to thy will, may effectually be obtained, to the relief of our necessity, and to the setting forth of thy glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 834).