

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Normal Intimacy with God Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time Tuesday, July 7, 2015
8:15 AM **Gn 32:23-33**; Mt 9:32-38 (Isn't this really what human nature is created in the image of God to commune with God?)

We are reading the Book of Genesis. The stories of the Book of Genesis are all of great interest, and they reveal a sense of **closeness between God and our ancestors in faith**, in this case Jacob. Yesterday we had the story of the vision or the dream of the stairway, again, symbolizing **connection between the domain of God and the human situation**.

Here is a very strange little story about **Jacob wrestling all night long**. Now with whom is he wrestling? Some commenters will say, well, this was an angel, whatever that is supposed to mean. But there is not really a message, and angels are supposed to bring messages. So what is this all about? The man himself says, **"You have contended with God"**; so this is one of the many indications of this sort of intimacy between a manlike, a humanlike God, because Jacob names the place Peniel, the face of God. So he is saying, well, I beheld God and didn't die. That was always the fear that anyone who looked into the face of God would die. And yet, nonetheless, **they were visited all the time by God in various forms, usually looking like a man**. Moses also spoke with someone who looked like a man, although he couldn't see his face. So these are all indications of intimacy between humanity and God. Later on, however, **we see very clearly that this sort of intimacy tends to die away, and people become institutionalized**, meaning that they have to go to the Temple or they have to have the Ark, carry around the Ark to sense the presence of God.

We might examine ourselves in this regard. **Are we closing ourselves off from something that is basic, an intimacy with God?** Isn't this really what human nature is created in the image of God to commune with God? Isn't this really in a sense the most

natural thing? When we talk about nature or human nature, we often bring in all kinds of very negative qualities. But are they really natural? Of course since we are free everything is human nature. We are free to be this way, that way, good, bad, just, unjust, and so on—that's true. But perhaps we are overlooking something very fundamental, that **we are created to be in communion with God, and listening to God is something actually we are created to do.** It's not extraordinary. It's not unusual. It's what is supposed to be. And visions are supposed to be directing our lives. But we perhaps are being formed in a culture that doesn't believe in any of this, and so we don't really believe in it either. **We tend not to look at the manifestations of God.** We are taught to turn away from or ignore the word of God when it comes to our hearts. We imagine we are imagining, but what **the Scripture is suggesting is that God is very close, and we need to be aware of that.**