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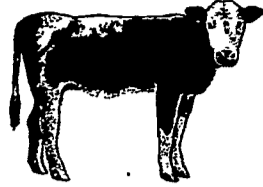
Dreams

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People also can read numerous accounts of dreams in the Bible. In Matthew 1 and 2, for example, Joseph is urged to take Mary as his wife and later is led to travel to Egypt and to Nazareth; Job 4:15-21 and Numbers 12:6 tell of God "opening the ears of men" in dreams; and in 1 Kings 3:5-15 God answers Solomon by granting him a wise heart and the understanding to govern well.

In their 1984 book *Dreams and Spiritual Growth: A Christian Approach to Dreamwork*, Louis M. Savary, Patricia H. Berne and Strehon K. Williams wrote that the conviction God speaks through dreams appears in the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Augustine, Basil the Great, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, Ambrose, Jerome and others.

But dreams "always had mixed review, even in the Old Testament," said Mary-Therese Dombeck, of the University of Rochester nursing faculty and a part-time counselor at the Samaritan Pastoral Counseling Center. Her doctor of ministry thesis for the Colgate Rochester Divinity School, in fact, was on "Dream Telling in Small Groups: A Means of Spiritual Awareness." She also is a board member for the Association for the Study of Dreams, based in Vienna, Va., whose 600 members in-



clude counseling and medical professionals and researchers.

Dream sharing can help unify us and affirm our religious beliefs, Dombeck said. People of similar religious background can point out possible symbols in dreams — water for baptism, and walking for a pilgrimage, for example. Both she and Sister Reger have organized such sharing groups.

However, only the dreamer can interpret a dream's meaning, counselors caution. An "aha" reaction intuitively tells them they're on the right track.

More recently, Dombeck has noticed in nursing a resurgence of interest in dreams as a means of tending to spiritual care.

Still, discussion of dream interpretation and spirituality is often greeted with skepticism among some people.

The Rev. Morton Kelsey, an Episcopal priest who wrote the 1974 book *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, contended that one reason for this ambivalence is that Jerome, in translating the Bible into Latin, mistranslated a Hebrew word, "anan," which means witchcraft or soothsaying in Hebrew, in two of 10 places.

Jerome interpreted the word as "dreams"

in Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10, Rev. Kelsey explained. So these passages warned against observing dreams, instead of witchcraft or soothsaying. The translations remained throughout the Middle Ages and on into the mid-1900s.

In the 13th century, Aquinas' thought — that there is nothing for us to know beyond material reality and rational consciousness — began to take hold and left no room for dreams, Rev. Kelsey wrote.

At the turn of this century, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung inspired a scientific approach to dreams. Freud mainly took them to be repressed wishes, while Jung focused on their collective symbols.

The newer approach is dream *work* rather than dream *analysis*, with the understanding ultimately lying with the dreamer.

Today, according to Father Frederic A. Maples, SJ, a Jungian analyst in the Diocese of Rapid City, S.D., "The (Catholic) church, compared to fundamentalist Protestant culture, is on the whole comfortable with contemporary psychology and accepts use of dreams. There is no official teaching of the church (concerning dreams) I know of."

In fact, the church uses dreams a great deal, he said, especially in training spiritual directors.

"A dream is a spontaneous inner parable," observed Father Maples, who studied

at the C.J. Jung Institute of Chicago and has taught on dreams across the country. "In the Bible Jesus says, 'How can I tell you about the kingdom of God?' ... In a dream, a deep inner voice, perhaps ultimately God, might be saying, 'How can I tell you about your situation?'"

A key Jungian concept is that "when you get deeply into the psyche you end up meeting very profound images of God. It stands to reason; we are created in God's image," Father Maples said. "I'm not talking magic here. Everything comes from God."

Dreams are an "indispensable tool" in spiritual direction, argued the Rev. Carroll Travis, pastor of Trinity Episcopal Church in Rochester, who has led dream workshops for parishes and Borromeo Prayer Center. He also has studied at the Jungian Institute of Zurich.

Rev. Travis' own three children grew up sharing their dreams at breakfast. "It has been a nourishing, healthful practice," he said. "But we don't spend our lives sitting around talking about dreams." He encourages regular Bible reading and dream sharing in families' prayer lives.

Rev. Travis couldn't recall counseling sessions in recent years where the persons didn't talk about dreams.

"When they come for counseling they aren't the poets of the world; they're more like the engineers of Kodak. They need someone to listen to a part of them they are close to rejecting," Rev. Travis said.

He recalled a Catholic woman in one of his workshops three years ago who had a simple dream of an angel at the foot of her bed. Upon awakening, he said, she knew what she had only known intellectually.

"In my view, it was an annunciation of the reality she believed and gave her new confidence and courage for what she was facing in her life then," he said.

The challenge is how to determine what God is saying through dreams, he said.

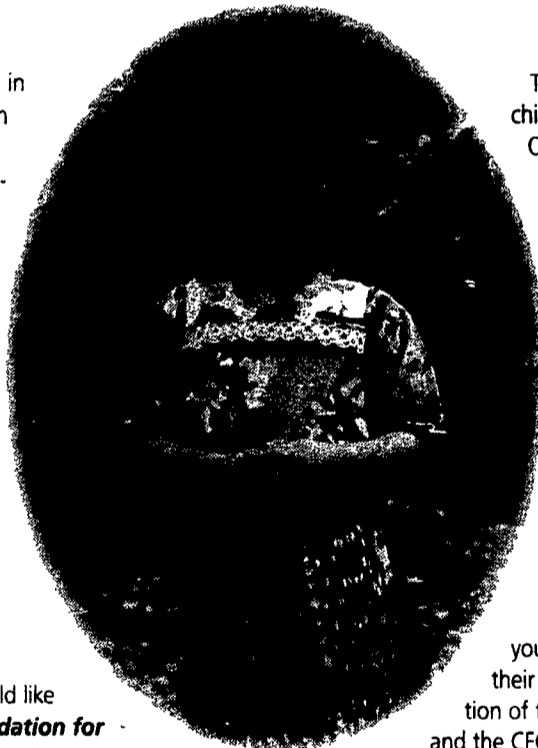
"And you don't do that by going out and buying a book of dream symbolism, calling a psychic hot line or consulting astrology in the paper," Rev. Travis remarked.

Sister Reger offered several suggestions for dealing with dreams, including:

- "Honor" the dream. Be attentive, write them down, reflect on and discuss them.
 - Ask "How am I feeling in the dream? When have I felt this way?"
 - Ask "What do I associate with the dream image?" Recognize recurring symbols.
 - Ask "Who is the character in the dream for me; how do I feel about that person; is there anything like me in that person?" (Characters seldom represent the actual person they seem.)
 - Pray with dreams, invite God into a dream with you and let it unfold.
 - Ask what God wants you to know through a feeling or image in your dream.
 - Look for multiple levels of meaning.
- "It generally is fair to say that dreams, whether from God or not, are consistent with the way God builds upon and guides nature," Father Maples said. "They're trustworthy — it's what we do with them."

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