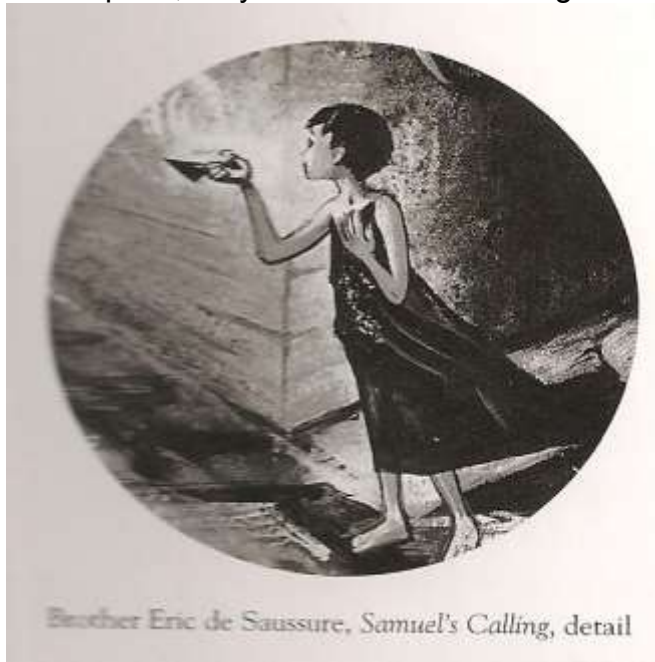


The verb *epiphaino* simply means “to show oneself” or “to make an appearance.” The noun *epiphaneia* is “an appearing.” In religious contexts an epiphany is “a visible manifestation of a hidden divinity, either in the form of a personal appearance, or by some deed of power.

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Now God came and stood there, calling as before,  
“Samuel! Samuel!”  
And Samuel said,  
“Speak, for your servant is listening.”



Boucher Eric de Saussure, *Samuel's Calling*, detail

Listen, my child . . . with the ear of your heart.  
Hearken to my words if you would have life!

St. Benedict, sixth century

Prayer. Come, Holy spirit Come, make your home in our midst and within in each one of us. Reveal to us our core goodness as beloved children of God. Weave us together in unity and love as we seek out and affirm God's goodness in those we meet. Amen.

### “Being Known”

Vanity, vanity, all is vanity,  
. . . The fool says in his heart, there is no God.  
Ecclesiastes

‘Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who’s the fairest of them all?’ It’s from the fairy tale, “Snow White.” The vain queen has a magic mirror that she asks on a daily basis who the fairest one in the kingdom is. Every day the mirror responds with ‘you are’, until one day it answered: “Snow White is the fairest of them all.” The unexpected answer immediately shattered her fantasy world. Jealously and anger morphed into vengeance and murderous rage. Like the Greek mythical character Narcissus (the one who fell in love with his own reflection in the water), she could not tolerate wounding of the self image that she had formed in her own mind’s eye.

In the daily devotional entitled, ‘Selfie,’ Rev. Schaper got me thinking about the fundamental reason why vain mirroring goes bad. In ‘Selfie’ she wrote: ‘A selfie is a picture you take of yourself with your own cell phone. Then you put it on social media to broadcast your moment. Your friends ‘like’ it or ‘comment’ on it or ‘retweet’ it. You become seen. You become known. You become real. Psychologists tell us that the most powerful experience people can have is to be recognized. In pastoral counseling training, we are told to mirror our conversant. Feed back to them what they just said, so they can hear it and hear themselves saying it.’ Many say that social conflict can be resolved with an even more sophisticated version of “I hear you saying.” Anti-immigrant voices can often calm down if we say, “I hear you saying that you have deep respect for the law and are troubled by those who seem to be breaking it.” When you pray at the city council after a police incident, be sure to pray for the policeman as well as the victim. Recognize, recognize, recognize. Mirror, mirror, mirror. Show that you are listening. So what do you think? If the mirror had said to the vain queen, “I hear you saying that your greatest desire is to be known as the beautiful person you are but negative feelings get the better of you when someone deemed fairer out-shines you”---- would her anger have been calmed and her deepest fears relieved? Is mirroring our passport into the transforming place of being known by another?

Being known is an intimacy issue of self discovery that requires the revealing of who and what we are. It begins with the disclosure of non-threatening aspects of oneself and ends with the telling of one's deepest truths. Being known is the compelling dynamic that encourages the development of our unique self. It works beautifully until we stop blossoming and get stuck in what Peter Gomes (Harvard preacher and author of 'The Good Book') calls 'the imposter syndrome'. Explaining he wrote:

We spend our days, in image building, trying to hide our weaknesses from one another, whether in the boardroom, on the athletic field or on the battlefield. We dress a certain way, use body language and speech in a certain way, and even pile up credentials and experience to prove that we are "good enough." "Well, there is good news, and that is why they call it the gospel. The news is not that we're worse than we think, it is that we are better than we think, and better than we deserve to be. Why? Because at the very bottom of the whole enterprise is the indisputable fact that we are created, made, formed, invented, patented in the image of goodness itself. That is what it means, that is how one translates being created in the image of God: It means to be created in the image of goodness itself. . . self-worth, self-esteem, self-value, these are not essays in mere ego, these are essays in divinity . . . the stuff of goodness and godliness itself, and it is that image that provides security and serenity in the world. People may take everything away from you, they may deprive you of everything you have and value, but they cannot take away from you the fact you are a child of God and bearing the expression of God in your very soul. You cannot be destroyed, and that cannot be denied.

'O God, you have searched me and known me . . .  
I come to the end---I am still with you.

Psalm 139:1,18

Once upon a time, young Rabbi Zusya was quite discouraged about his failures and weaknesses. Seeing the negative hold that his needy ego was having upon him, an older rabbi said to him, "When you get to heaven, God is not going to say to you, "Why weren't you Moses?" No, God will say, "Why weren't you Zusya?" So why don't you stop trying to be Moses, and start being the Zusya God created you to be?" I like the way in which

God challenged young Samuel's 'imposter syndrome' with a personal call from God. I like to image God saying to him: "I know that you are afraid of growing up, afraid of leaving Samuel and leaving home, afraid of encountering strangers, afraid of facing evil in the world . . . but I know that you cry my cry of an Israel subdued, put down, mocked by those who would deny its God." In know that you yearn for God to come and right wrongs, lift up the poor, set free the captives, bring power to the oppressed and healing to those who suffer' (Christian Century, 20, 1/7/15)  
What do you think? Is knowing the heart of God and mirroring it the way to stay on the path of developing our good self?

I also like the way in which Jesus challenged Nathanael's 'imposter syndrome' when they first met (John 1:43-51). When Nathanael tried to devalue Jesus with the discrediting words, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Jesus interrupted his put down attitude by greeting him with: 'Here is truly an Israelite, in him there is no deceit!' So, what do you think? Did Nathanael's comeback question, "Where did you get to know me . . . (as only God knows me)? pop into his mind as he remembered words about being intimately known by God in psalm 139? 'O God, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up, you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, 'O God, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. Jesus knew, affirmed, and revealed the Godly secret of the purity of Nathanael's heart. Some would say that it is in our mirroring of this gospel speak that we discover deepest truths about our core good self. Some would also say that gospel speak is our passport to peace and unity. That when we recognize and mirror inherent goodness in strangers and enemies, compassionate heart opening experiences are known. Simply because, being intimately known fosters relationships of trust in which the Love of God casts out all fear.