

Part 9: Looking at ourselves

Start with a short prayer.

How did the week go? Share some of your experiences from your meditations. (15 minutes)

Continuing with the theme of 'I am many', read this poem by Dietrich Bonhoeffer called

Who am I?

Who am I? They often tell me
I stepped from my cell's confinement
Calmly, cheerfully, firmly
Like a squire from his country house.
Who am I? They often tell me
I used to speak to my warders
Freely and friendly and clearly,
As though it were mine to command.
Who am I? They also tell me
I bore the days of misfortune
Equably, smilingly, proudly,
Like one accustomed to win.
Am I then really all that which other men tell of me?
Or am I only what I myself know of myself?
Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage,
Struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat,
Yearning for colours, for flowers, for the voices of birds,
Thirsting for words of kindness, for neighbourliness,
Tossing in expectation of great events,
Powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance,
Wearied and empty at praying, at thinking, at making,
Faint and ready to say farewell to it all?
Who am I? This or the other?
Am I one person today and tomorrow another?
Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,
And before myself a contemptibly woebegone weakling?
Or is something within me still like a beaten army,
Fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?
Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I AM THINE.



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Spend 10 minutes reflecting on what this poem is saying about who you are.

Now try the following exercise:

List all the different situations which form a part of your life, eg. work, family, church, sport, etc. Next to each part, write how you would like to appear in each situation and then what you don't want to be seen as.

For example:

In situations at work, I like to be seen as capable and efficient; whereas I don't like to be seen as unfulfilled or sad. In situations with friends, I like to be seen as warm and easy going; whereas I don't like to be seen as lonely or unsure.

Here are some more examples of how we like to appear to others: wise, funny, successful, impressive, coping, having answers, cheerful, happy, open, honest, friendly, easy to get along with, interesting, knowing where we are going in life, etc.

How we do not like to appear to others: confused, slow, simple, bored, poor, childish, frightened, unsure, insecure; also the opposites of all the above.

Draw up as clear a list in your journal as you can; it will become very useful in your reflections. You can keep adding to the list as you go along. Share as much or as little as you choose with the group. (30 minutes)

Either aloud or in silence you can end with the following prayer:

Lord, I do not know myself,

but you know me.

I am ashamed that you know me.

How can you love me?

Yet you do love me. Thank you!

Thank you for accepting me,

understanding me,

forgiving me.

Whatever I am worth to you,

I AM YOURS.

At home this week meditate on some of the following passages:

Psalm 42

Matthew 6:1–8

Colossians 3:10–11

Luke 9:46–50

Luke 10:29–37.



Sergio Milandri has a Masters in Personal Formation and has been a relationship mentor in South Africa for over 25 years. He and his wife, Elizabeth, live in Hout Bay, Cape Town, and run the Sans Pareil Retreat Centre from there.

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