

Every Person Is Related to God

Let me start with a quote from Rowan Williams' book Being Disciples: Essentials of the Christian Life:

“Being disciples means being called to see others, and especially others in profound need, from the perspective of an eternal and unflinching, unalterable love.... For the Christian disciple, human dignity... depends upon the recognition that every person is related to God before they are related to anything or anyone else.”



This is our task. As Christians we must cultivate a different vision of other people: a vision that goes beyond what they do; what they own; whom they voted for. A Pew Study showed that just before the election, when people were asked, “If the presidential candidate you did not vote for was elected, would it do lasting harm to our country?” 89% Democrats and 90% Republicans said “yes.”

How can we get from where we are in this political divide to “unflinching, unalterable love”? How can we get to a place that recognizes that people’s relation to God is more important than how they voted?

One of the mystics said, “Look for God where you lost God.” I think that means, go back to where you were before you started categorizing the world with strict labels. Our need to label the world gives us control but also puts us at a distance from the world as it is. As the poet Wallace Stevens wrote, “Things as they are, are changed on the blue guitar.” We interpret the world to understand it, but that process is our blue guitar that changes “things as they are” into something we can label and understand. That process limits our vision and our ability to love.

Lent is a season where the light is growing both outside and inside. We are preparing for our old self to be crucified so that we might also be resurrected. Remember that in much of the history of the Church, those who were excommunicated came back to Church for the Maundy Thursday service. They rejoined the community in both the washing of feet as well as the Eucharist. They were made new, and their past was truly past. With the whole congregation at the Easter Vigil, they heard the cantor sing, “How holy is this night, when wickedness is put to flight and sin is washed away. It restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to those who mourn. It casts out pride and hatred and brings peace and concord.”

To prepare for the deepest mysteries of Holy Week, let us be honest about those we have put in boxes as well as the ways we have insulated ourselves in our box. Let us walk towards peace and concord as well as innocence and joy.

I know this is hard in Covid world because we are necessarily isolated, but we may have more time for reflection. How can we learn to see? How can we erase our definition of others so that we might be resurrected? How can we open our hearts?

I can only speak for myself. Here’s one step. Each day I pray for my family and people close to me. I pray for those who have asked me to pray for them because they are sick or in a hard place. I remember my thanksgivings. Then I say the names of the people I have put in a box—a negative box—and I ask for God to let me see these people as they are and not as I have defined them. I am

not praying for them; I am praying that my sin will be washed away. So, when we proclaim, "Christ is risen, we are risen," I can hope I am part of the "we."

May we remember: "For the Christian disciple, human dignity... depends upon the recognition that every person is related to God before they are related to anything or anyone else."