

i-den-ti-ty

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year B



Who am I?

This may be one of the most persistent and far-reaching of all questions and might be why Socrates asserted tirelessly, "Know thyself!" Even Pilate's question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), seems secondary. "Being" is more elemental than "knowing."

The two accounts of creation in the Book of Genesis reveal God's purpose for humanity. It is a religious vision concerned exclusively with the divine message that a human person (including Jesus, as God's beloved - Matthew 3:17) find their fulfilment in YHWH (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1730-1742).

The human person (Adam) made in God's image and likeness has, from the very beginning, been created for relationship: first of all with God, and then with other persons (Eve). Being created in God's image and likeness, the human person has also been created free, for only in freedom can there be a true relationship of love in which each of the lovers takes delight in the mystery of the other.

Human freedom, however free, is ultimately conditional. It is at the service of values. It is freedom *for*: for others, for service, for relationship.

JOHN 12:20-33

Some Greeks who had come to worship at the Passover Feast came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put forth this request: "Please, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew and together, the two went to tell Jesus.

Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Chosen One to be glorified. The truth of the matter is, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. If you love your life, you will lose it; if you hate your life in this world, you will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my follower be. Anyone who serves me will be honored by Abba God."

"Now my soul is troubled. Yet what should I say? 'Abba, save me from this hour?' It was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Abba, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again." The crowds that stood nearby heard this and said it was a clap of thunder; but others said, "It was an angel speaking."

Jesus answered, "It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours. Sentence is now being passed on this world; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown. And when I am lifted up from this earth, I will draw all people to myself,"

By these words Jesus indicated the kind of death he would die.

FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you identify yourself? As you speak to others, what identity of yours do you usually convey (nationality, race, religion, gender, occupation, orientation, or others)? How do you live out your identity as a child of God?
2. The surprising entry of some Greeks - curious to "see" Jesus - at the Passover festival suggests the ever-expanding reach of the One who now draws all nations and all peoples to God. How aware are you of others in the LGBTQ/ally community who do not share other parts of your identity? Do the "Greeks" in the Gospel inspire you to cross boundaries and engage others unlike yourself? What prevents you from seeking the face of Jesus in some peoples or nations?
3. How does the gospel paradox - "*unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain, but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest*" - inspire you to embrace your calling or purpose however difficult that may seem?
4. As "the hour" approaches, we see a more vulnerable Jesus - one whose "soul is troubled." In this part of the Gospel, Jesus struggles with his identity as witnessed in the prayer dialogue with Abba God. As you dwell on these verses what has been the greatest challenge to your identity as an LGBTQ person or ally? Have you ever asked to be "saved from this hour?" What emotions or feelings stir up within you as you hear Abba God respond, "I have glorified your name, and I will glorify it again?"
5. At the end of the Gospel passage, Jesus says he will "draw people" to himself. What parts of your personality or identity are inviting or welcoming? In which areas do you feel the need to grow so as to best serve God?
6. In today's first reading, YHWH says, "*I will put my Law in their minds and on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people... All of them, from the least to the greatest, shall know me for I will forgive their misdeeds and will remember their sins no more*" (Jeremiah 31: 33-34). As an LGBTQ person/ally does such a revelation comfort and strengthen you? How can you preach this Good News - or be of service - to others in the LGBTQ community who for various reasons may still identify as the "least" because of harmful rhetoric, customs, traditions or theology?

PRAYER

Psalm 139: 1-6, 13-14, 17, 23-24

YHWH, you have searched me, and you know me
You know when I sit or stand,
you know my thoughts from afar.
Whether I walk or rest, you are watching;
You are intimate with all of my ways.

A word is not even on my tongue, YHWH,
before you know what it is.
You encircle me, before and behind,
shielding me with your hand.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
a height my mind cannot reach!

You formed my inmost being,
and knit me in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works -
my very self you know.
How precious to me are your designs, O God;
how impossible to number them!

Examine me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts -
see if there is misdeed within me,
and guide me in the way that is eternal.

