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"Me" or "We?"

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"Me" or "We?"

Often we read or hear about those who classify one or other group of people as "them:" some less-than-persons whose behavior does not meet with the approval of the writers or speakers. They describe others primarily by their presumed or assumed differences, not their similarities. The distinction that people make between one group and another often reflects the particular attitudes and beliefs of those who see themselves only as individuals, and not as members of community. Their primary focus is "me."

A married couple may speak of "we, and so can almost all of us use the collective pronoun in many appropriate contexts. "We" expresses a beautiful, meaningful truth about us. Though each of us is a unique individual person, we have more in common with one another than we have qualities that make us radically different. God did not create us as individuals so that each of us might have an exclusive relationship with him. Rather, we are social in nature. We cannot be fulfilled or become fully human without reference to other persons. There is no "me" unless there is "we."

If we consider some of the "we" statements that are true for us, we might be both surprised and pleased at what we find. Each of us gives much to, and receives much from, many other people in the course of a day. We are workers and colleagues; we are citizens. We interact in buying and selling, we are engaged in a wide range of conversations with others about business, life, faith, and nothing in particular. We sometimes pray or worship together; we belong to, and identify ourselves with, clubs, committees, and volunteer activities. We are friends and we are families. Even some people we do not know by name meet the criteria of "we," sharing a common origin and one common destiny.

Each of us could make an "inventory meditation" of the human connections that comprise the graced, providential, and growth-causing groupings that deserve to be identified correctly as "we." A conversation with one or more persons might lead to the discovery of some common interests that we share. One or another of us might have encountered a stranger, a person at the store, who smiled and helped us find what we were seeking: a moment of human interaction in which both gained something. Even a very small experience of "we" carries us forward in life more quickly and surely than when the focus is entirely on "me."

Though each of us has unique experiences of God, many of these encounters become more deeply appreciated and fully appropriated when we talk about them with someone else. Many of us find consolation in common worship, shared prayer, conversations about our yearning for God, trying to learn more about God, come closer to God, and to appreciate God's revelation of self in our every-day circumstances. All of these are examples of "we" relating with God.

Each of us has needs that can only be met by other persons. Our independence is not primarily that of individuals but of communities – communities in which we are interdependent. We grow as individuals to the extent of our engaging in the variety of "we" interactions and relationships that are appropriate for us as we grow, mature, and move through life. Our lives reflect that of God, who, as Love, is also "we:" Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For us humans, our best "me" is when we attend to our "we" with God.