

5. BEING HUMAN

1. The creation story tells us that God formed people from the earth, and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life; and they became living beings. People were created in God's image, according to God's likeness. And God called this "good." So we, too, should call it good and begin our understanding of people as a blessing, and not a curse. Our inherent identity stems from the very life of God.

2. The core of our identity, our actual being and soul, is sometimes referred to as the True Self. It knows who we really are. It is connected to all the other True Selves in the world, and to God. Because of this, we are all interrelated and interdependent.

3. We sometimes forget this and get lost. We forget that we came with a built-in connection to our Creator, a love-line from God's heart to ours. We somehow get separated from God, at least in our minds, but not in God's mind. Then we try to find our identity in many of the wrong things instead of in God. Paul tells us that one of our main challenges in life is to reconnect to our original identity "hidden with Christ in God." Perhaps this is one way of defining salvation.

4. A false self can emerge from within, a "little self" that tries to confuse us with illusions, and tempts us with power, or prejudice, or fear, or busyness. It feeds on guilt and shame, on anxiety and arrogance. We must be aware when this happens, and pause to check on reality. We must seek the inner true self with meditation and contemplation, and finding God in the patterns of life that we see around us.

A Common Rule for Monastics

5. To dissolve the false self
should not be a violent act.
We simply work to become aware of it
and all the waste
and harm it can cause us.
Soon, the scales over our eyes fall away
and we begin to see clearly, deeply.
We die to the old self,
that our new self may live.
We empty ourselves of the old,
to make room for the new.

6. The fruits of the Spirit shine through,
and we gradually begin to know
who we are – our interests,
our skills, our likes,
and how we are interconnected
to those around us.
We gradually become
who we were made to be,
not anything we want to be,
but who we are supposed to be.
That's all we are,
and that's more than enough.

7. In our True Self
we begin to see ourselves
and others deeply.
We see past false selves and
into the depths of the human heart.
We see possibilities and bridges,
where before we saw
only limits and walls.
We no longer think in “either/or” terms,
but rather we think in “and/also” terms.

8. Instead of division, we see unity.
Instead of separation, we see connection.
Instead of competition, we see collaboration.
Instead of scarcity, we see abundance.
Instead of privilege, we see fairness.
Instead of punishment, we see restoration.
Instead of hurting, we see healing.
Instead of falsehood, we see truth.
Instead of death, we see life.

“Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.”
- Oscar Wilde