

“Children of God”

John 1:1-14

December 25, 2019

Both my mother and father often said to my sisters and me, "Remember who you are." When I got my driver's license and began dating, one of them said, "Remember who you are." When I began teaching in Oshawa, I think it was mom said, "Remember who you are." The week my dad was dying, he said to me, "Remember who you are."

The longer I live, the more I understand what mom and dad meant. They meant that above all else - above education, career, achievements - remembering who I was, as their beloved son, remembering how they invested their hopes and dreams in me, and how in love we would always belong to each other: these mattered most.

A sense of belonging in loving and lasting relationships is essential for our well-being. Belonging is not just through our biological parents and family of origin. Lots of children these days never know their birth parents. If they are lucky, they are adopted by adults who just want to love them, care for them, and give them a future. For these children, all that matters is, that they know who loves them. They know where home is.

Belonging is one of the most important, if not the most important dimension of our happiness and meaning in life. A sense of belonging can come through parents, marriage, family, a circle of close friends, or a faith community. Whatever the source, feeling that we belong in loving and lasting relationships is essential.

Too some, they don't have that experience. Often our relationships drift apart: like my best man, whom I haven't seen him in 40 years; or relationships get broken. When that happens, we need to find our way and ourselves again. With life as we know it, all relationships of this world are fleeting. Misunderstanding, misfortune, distance, and death can claim our most precious ones.

Then there's the matter of mistaken identity - when we try to live as someone we are not. It doesn't last and after a while, it all comes apart and we are left drifting and lost.

Finally, there is our fallible human condition. We fail to get things right and all too often get things wrong. Even the apostle Paul self-revealed, "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Rom 7:19).

How do we navigate life's relationships, manage our fallible nature? How do we remember who we are so that life has meaning, purpose, and direction?

All of us need a relationship at the core of our being that is not worldly and fleeting, a relationship that transcends life's ups and downs, life's relativity and death's finality. That relationship is our divine-human one with God our creator. God created us as spiritual beings. That primordial awareness never leaves us. It haunts us, and beckons us.

John wrote "In the beginning . . ." about God and the Word, Jesus. God was so in love with and committed to the creation that God became one of us, Jesus. God

became one of us to give us the power to become children of God. A less-involved god could have kept at a distance, played it safe, and waited to see how the creation would work out. But the God of John's conviction committed everything and risked everything in becoming human. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." We refer to this most radical idea of God in all of human history as incarnation: God becoming incarnate - that term literally means, a real person. Jesus was that person! And Saint Athanasius might have said it best, "He became what we are that we might become what he is" (The Incarnation of the Word).

Becoming a child of God is to become all that God ever intended us to be. Being a child of God means we know our source, we know our sustaining relationship, and we know to whom we ultimately belong. Being a child of God means this: all other dimensions of ourselves find their true expression through this core relationship. It means we can live, not in self-striving, superficiality, or self-deception - but in grace and truth.

Living in grace and truth is to live in the assurance and freedom of God's light and life. It is to be transparent: what you see is what you get. When we live in grace and truth, we are not trying to be something we are not, something the world imposes on us. We are resting our being in God's grace upon grace.

This core relationship, sustainable and everlasting, is available to everyone. To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gives power to become children of God.

God's Word became flesh and lived among us so that God could give us every hope and confidence that we can live as God's beloved children, full of grace and truth. Even you. Even me. God's child. Remember who you are.