

Reflection for Ordinary Time - Tuesday, June 19th

*O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?*

Psalm 139:1-7

Psalm 139 is a poem of intimacy. Our God knows us completely. God knows our every move, our every thought. God knows our mistakes, our compassion for others, our evil motives, our most silent gifts, not to mention the ones shown to the world. In other words God is intimately intertwined with the whole stories of our lives and beyond. God knows everything about us and loves us completely, loves even us in our worse and most ugly moments. We can never escape God's embrace.

Last Tuesday I listened to the funeral for George Floyd, the man killed by police in Minneapolis who was the spark that lit Black Lives Matter protests all over the world. Like so many African American men he had been seen as a danger, a threat—and therefore meriting measures by police that ended his life. But what emerged after his death was a different picture. He was an athlete, a rap musician, a loving father and uncle, an active church member, a friend, He was a man who was loved by his community and by God. What emerged was George Floyd's story.

A learning that I have carried for over fifty years comes from a book by Martin Buber, *I and Thou*. We often treat people as "its" or "they's". Buber asks us to treat others not as "its" but as "thous", as holy beings rather than objects. There is a tendency to assign those we don't know or whom we find threatening into categories of "theys." "All Mexicans are drug dealers." "All Black men are up to no good." "All Moslems are terrorists" "All Democrats are for more government control." "All Republicans are against gun control." It goes on and on. We all do it. Tribalism and division abound.

Everyone has a story that makes them into a "thou" rather than an "it". God's invitation to all of us is to get to know each other's stories, to get to know people as beings, uniquely and wonderfully made, and not as categories. The invitation is for us to become tellers of our stories and listeners to the stories of others and then observe how we are changed. In order to live in authentic community our individual stories need to be shared and celebrated.

Prayer: *O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? Amen.*