

Last week there were no blogs for the first time since we entered COVIDland. The reason for this was that my much-loved mom Rhoda passed away last Sunday. As we grieved together last week as family, I was in no place to publish blogs. To those who have waited patiently for them to resume, thank you.

Big events in our lives tend to lead us to self-examination. Whether it is the natural leaps of the aging process (from childhood to adolescence to adulthood) or natural events of life in Western society (education, employment, marriage, children, retirement) or large traumas big and small (losing family, losing jobs, moving, divorce, pandemics), large events often trigger a period of inward reflection.

And this is good. “The unexamined life is not worth living,” Socrates said and it is true. To live life without introspection not only forces us to learn hard lessons again and again, it never allows us to mature, grow, or gain wisdom. Every one of us does well with a journal/diary, quiet times alone, and a guide to help us ask the right questions, whether a parent, a Spiritual Director, or a wiser and older friend.

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. – Ps. 139:13-16*

God created us to be who we are. Unfortunately, before we can begin to explore who that is we bury that Self under mounds of societal expectations, rules, and stereotypes. We listen to everyone else around us telling us who we are and who we should be and we begin to take on those roles, those masks, those *personae*. But when we begin to mature, when big life events happen, we begin to see traces of the “me” God created me to be. So, we spend years trying to dig into the character we’ve created around ourselves to discover who we truly were meant to be. And this is hard; tearing away masks we’ve worn for so long that they are now a part of who we believe we are hurts. But it needs to be our life-long goal to discover who God made us to be regardless.

As a Spiritual Director, I am both walking with others on this journey and taking this journey myself. I am both asking and trying to answer the important questions. And in every situation I find one thing to be universally true.

*Then God said, “Let us make humankind in Our image, in Our likeness...” So God created humankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. – Gen. 1:26-27*

The voices around and inside of us will tell us over and over that we were created in the world’s image. We are less than others, we are weak, we are unlovable, these voices say. But the Truth is that we are created in God’s image. Every one of us. Without exception. And as we dig inward to find the True “me”, I will also find God, for the “me” I seek is made in God’s image. Very interesting thought coming from a culture that thought any image of God was blasphemy!

In the days that come, we’re going to look at 9 different aspects of the Image of God, aspects that we tend to lean toward. As you read, see which of these nine most resonates with you and your experience. And if you want a companion as you dig in to yourself, as you begin to find the seams of your masks and pull them away, let me know. I’d love to walk with you.