

# Who are You?



A few weeks ago we celebrated the King's birthday holiday. At that time, a number of Australians received awards, such as the Order of Australia Medal, for the work they had done, but not for who they were, yet who we are and what we do are closely connected. I have mentioned in past leaflets about our identity as human beings, I now wish to focus just on *who we are*, and how this changes and is changed by our relationships with God, other people and creation.

The animal above, 'Possy', is curled up asleep. He is more than a ball of fur, he has an identity as a brush-tailed possum, who sleeps in the day time but is active at night. Also, along with other animals, he is part of God's loved creation.

When we need to identify ourselves officially, we are usually asked for our name, date of birth and address. As baptised Christians, the Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer* asked us our name, and then who gave us this name. The reply to who gave us our name, was, our Godparents, at our baptism, when we were made, "a member of Christ, the child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." The Catechism in *A Prayer Book for Australia*, also states our baptismal identity as "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an

inheritor of the kingdom of heaven”.

If we put aside, momentarily, our particular identity as Christians, I believe that all humans, whether they deny it or declare it, are loved children of God, regardless of name, age, address, race, gender, disability or anything else that makes us the unique people we are.

When ‘God’s loved children’ is applied to *all* people, it affirms that our identity is first a close connection to God, and then to one another as members of the one family of God. Accepting that God loves not only us, but all other human beings as well, can direct us how we are to treat one another. Rowan Williams in his book, “Being Human”, suggests that our relationships with others can be described as, “the search to *echo* this permanent attitude of love, attention, respect which the Creator gives to what is made.” We and all people are to be given dignity, value and even reverence because of being created and loved by our God.

Further, as followers of Jesus we are called to love others as Jesus loves us. That is, we are to care about others and give our time, energy and even our lives to love and serve them. In such loving relationships, there is no place for domination or exercising power over others, rather, we are to share our lives with them, giving to and receiving from them.

As humans we cannot exist alone. Our lives need to be connected to others if we are to express the love of our Trinitarian God. As we grow, we have the possibility of interaction with others in various ways, such as talking and listening, teaching and learning, caring for and being cared for. In these ways we share with one another who we are and what we can do. Even when we disagree with someone, we are still to love them, and perhaps learn from them.

As God’s love for all humans can change the way we relate to other people, the same can be said of how God’s love for all creation can change how we relate to animals, plants, rivers, the land, etc.. We do not own nature, nor are we to dominate it, instead we are to be its caretakers, respecting it, loving it and gratefully working with it.

The relationships we have with people and nature are sometimes difficult or

painful, and sometimes encouraging or inspiring, but they always have the potential to enable us to grow in God's love. Normally we are not attracted to suffering and can try to reject or avoid it. Even Jesus did not welcome the possibility of his crucifixion, and in Mark 14:36 prayed that it might not happen. Yet the way through to Jesus' resurrection and new life for our sake, seemed to need him to pass through suffering and death.

When we are faced with painful experiences, be they small or large, we have the possibility to integrate them into our lives and may find that our resulting healing and growth can assist us to help others coping with similar experiences. Also, as Christians, we are strengthened by knowing that Jesus who suffered in his human life, is always with us, sharing in our suffering.

After Possy had frequented our cupboard on the veranda on and off for two years, he disappeared. I still miss him. One day before he left, I decided to stroke him gently with my forefinger. He responded by opening his eyes and peering at me, before closing them again, and contentedly returning to sleep. In these simple actions, our relationship seemed to deepen in God's love, and I think we each changed a little, for which I give thanks.

Let us not be as Possy is in the photo, hiding his face and eyes from the light, but be open to see God's love in the light, *and* in the dark as Possy does. We can then always be people who are open to God's love, in God, other people, ourselves and the world around us.

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