

Dear People Whom God Loves,

WHO ARE WE?

I think it is clear to most of us that we humans want to be happy. I think we also realize we often seek happiness in ways that don't make us happy. They may bring us some pleasure and enjoyment, but they don't bring happiness.

Before the Enlightenment, the individual rights of most people were not honored by most of the elite. In fact, I don't think the elite even thought much about individual rights. In our culture today we are much more aware of individual rights even though we don't always honor them.

But, because of this awareness of individual rights, there is a danger that we may be drawn into thinking we can find happiness as individual people. This can lead us to search for happiness by seeking wealth, power, fame or positions of "importance."

I am suggesting that we cannot become truly happy unless we love. When we love, someone else becomes a person to us. This person is someone and I am someone. We are joined but are distinct. Sometimes this is called an "I, thou" relationship.

With frail and halting words I would like to express this from our belief as Christians. This is not something that we can reason to. However, it is reasonable because it gives meaning to life and responds to our human drive for happiness, which I think of as the same as love.

In the first letter of John we hear "God is love." I take this to mean that to be God means to be Infinite love. In the beginning of John's Gospel we hear: "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.... And the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we gave his glory the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

The word flesh in scripture refers to humans from the point of view of human misery, boredom, and frustration. God became this particular man, Jesus of Nazareth.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians we hear the pre-Pauline hymn, "Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself by taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found

human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death even death on a cross.”

God who is love is humble. In Jesus, God comes to serve us, healing us from our unloving choices, in other words, saving us from sin. It is Love that is saving us, enabling us to be drawn out of our alienation of un-love into compassionate relationships with each other. It is the self-emptying love that is God that is expressed in our self-emptying relationships with others. This could never be done by kind of human or worldly effort. It is the gift of God’s own self. That is why we call it grace.

Who are we? We are not just ourselves. We are that, but, we are meant to be in relationship. Who are we? We are ourselves and are in relationship. We will not be happy until we are both because that is who we are.

The Christian message that comes from faith is reasonable because it responds to the human longing for happiness and shows the power that makes it happen. It is the Love Power we call God. It is the Love Power that is beyond our world and universe and at the same time within it as well.

Smile, God Loves You,
Father Clay