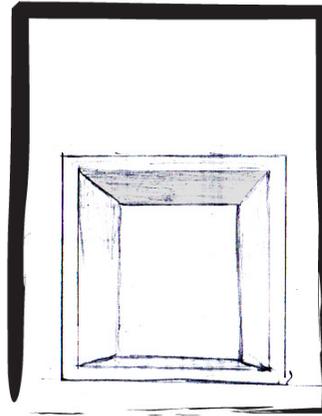


Our consumer society bombards us with images of the sort of people it says we should be. Advertisements tell us that this car or that perfume or these clothes or that plastic surgery will deliver fulfilment. They work just enough to get us hooked. We keep buying the products. We crave the glamorous lifestyle that the advertisements offer and believe it is the way to happiness. But the pursuit of self-fulfilment often ends in disappointment. These clothes, this car, this body are just not good enough. We long to be someone else: someone rich, someone beautiful, someone successful.

The Christian faith says that human beings are made in the image of a creative and loving God. This means that the essence of being human carries the fingerprint of a God who made us out of love. It means that God is at the centre of our lives whether we have realised it or not.

The Christian faith also proclaims that God in Jesus Christ became a human being and shared our human life. God knows what it's like to be human; he knows what it's like to feel disappointment, sadness,



and peace can be found. The joys we experience in our lives – and our lives contain both joy and sadness – will be magnified when we experience them as gifts of God.

Jesus shows us how to be ourselves

Jesus says that it's okay to be who we are. In fact, he says it's more than okay – it's what God wants. We are precious and beautiful in God's eyes. We don't need to try to find happiness by trying to become someone else – that is the empty message of the world – rather we can learn to become our true selves through Jesus Christ. God wants us to change – but not into someone else. God wants to change us into ourselves. God has a picture in his heart of the person we are capable of becoming.

In Christ we can become this person. Jesus demonstrates God's love and commitment. Jesus breaks the downward spiral of disappointment, of frantically seeking what will let us down, and delivers the message that we are loved and accepted as we are.

pain. He knows the temptation to put something else at the centre and he comes to put this right by restoring us as God's children. We are made to live as God's children. This is where fulfilment, happiness,

He does this through the most astonishing demonstration of love that the world has ever seen: he dies for us.

Jesus shows us what real humanity is like

Jesus' life and his teaching become the model for a new humanity. Loving God and real love of self and a selfless love of others become the way to self-fulfilment. We discover the amazing paradox that it is in losing our lives – letting go of self-centredness – that we find our true selves.

'God has a picture in his heart of the person we are capable of becoming ...'

Jesus opens up our way to God

Jesus' resurrection is the sign that all the barriers which separated us from God, from each other, and from ourselves are broken down. We have the promise of an eternal life that begins now. Loved, accepted, and forgiven by God, we can be ourselves and allow God's Spirit to make us more like Jesus.

This new way of being human is celebrated week by week in the feast of the Church which is called the Eucharist. There we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus and celebrate the joyful fact that we are welcome at his table, that the only entrance qualifications needed are his death on the cross and our own loving acceptance of the invitation to become fully alive, fully ourselves in him.

My
body
was
not
hidden

My body was not hidden from you, while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb; all of them were written in your book; they were fashioned day by day, when as yet there was none of them.

Psalm 139: 14-15 ECUSA Psalter

your
eyes
beheld
my
limbs

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