

Thought for the Day 10th June - John Reed

Read Romans 5:6-11

Have you ever wished you were someone else? Ever wondered what life might be like if you had that other person's job, or resources, or personality?

In my daily devotions a number of years ago now, I read of a 19-year-old college student who decided to find out what it was like to be saint Francis of Assisi. ["Being Me", www.lhm.org/dailydevotions, 8/11/09]. Like St. Francis, he went begging for food; washed with melted snow; dressed in a simple brown robe; talked to the animals, and so on.

What happened was that people whispered behind his back, they called the police, and they stared at him as if he were mad: pretty much the same way the original St. Francis' contemporaries treated him in the 11th century. The animals weren't much better. "I tried to talk to some birds," said the student. "They flew away."

Now that may seem extreme, but it struck me how often we actually do something similar. Peer group pressure persuades us to act in a way we wouldn't normally, just to seem more acceptable to our mates. We play the class clown in order to get attention. We dress to fit in with the right social group.

Why are we so often playing a part that is not truly us? I suspect that perhaps we are, deep down, scared to let on who we really are. Frightened that if people find out what we are really like, they might not like us very much.

And what about God? Aren't we afraid that if he really knew what we were like, he wouldn't have much time for us either?

The truth, of course, is that God does know us: "*O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar ...*" (Psalm 139:1-2). He knows the weaknesses and failings, the bitterness and the envy, the selfish ambition and rebellious thoughts that we successfully hide from others. He even knows how little regard we give to him. And yet, remarkable, he still loves us, and wants to have a relationship with us: "*But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8)

Charlotte Elliott once met a minister, César Malan, who asked her if she was a Christian. She took offense, and refused to discuss the issue. Three weeks later, they met again at the home of a mutual friend. She told the minister that ever since their last conversation she had been trying to find her Saviour, and that she now wanted to know how to come to Christ. "Just come to him as you are," he said. Shortly afterwards, she wrote this great hymn:

*Just as I am, without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*