

Masks

Putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Ephesians 4:25

We wrestle with many masks in our life. A mask, of course, is a lie. It is not the true self created in God's image. Often, getting in touch with the masks of our lives can free us from unnecessary burdens. The questions for each of us is, do we want to meet ourselves face to face or do we want to continue hiding behind a mask?

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (2 Timothy 1)

From early years we learn to put on masks for survival. Masks come in many shapes and colors.

- A "clown" mask we wear when we are afraid of looking at the deeper places of our hearts.
- An "I'm OK" mask that we wear when we don't want anyone to see our vulnerability.
- A "stone-face" mask we wear when we haven't spent time in the security of God's loving presence dealing with our heart and so we think we have to be "tough"
- An "angry" mask we use when we've been hurt and we want to feel strong rather than weak
- An "I'm too busy" mask we wear when we take ourselves so seriously that we think the whole world revolves around us and we've forgotten how to play and be gentle with others.
- A "rattling-on-mask" that we wear when we are afraid of silence or when we are trying to cover up our insecurities.
- A "poor me" mask we show to others when we want to be rescued and continue with the familiar rather than taking responsibility for what we are experiencing today

God invites us today to get in touch with how these masks keep us from living the truth of being ourselves and growing to become our best self. A mask is a great pain and a great lie. With sensitivity we can touch the masks of our lives. We can walk with them today in prayer.

God has created us in joy and in beauty. God created us as human beings. God knows every day of our lives and the circumstances of our lives. God has called us to live with each other and says that as we live the truth in love we will know great freedom. With God, we can face whatever we come across within our hearts and within our circumstances. There is healing for woundedness. There is forgiveness for wrongs. There is celebration of our uniqueness. There is peace for confusion. There is care and solutions for our worries and anxieties. There is honor and respect for the gifts and abilities God has given each of us. There is loving acceptance for our stumbles as we learn to walk in new ways. There is challenge and encouragement to face ourselves and be ourselves.

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. (Psalm 139)

O God, Lover of Truth, with gentle hands loosen the bonds of these masks. Let us walk in your light. Help us to discover the truth underneath each mask. Help us to receive ourselves as you created us to be.

Adapted from "Embracing Your Memories: A Journey of Healing for Lent," ©2002 Macrina Wiederkehr

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. What kind of masks do people use and why do they use them?
2. Why is a mask a place of great pain and a great lie?
3. How can we dare to remove a mask?
4. How can we balance the needs of our hearts and of others as we peel off masks and live together in the truth?