

What I Do Is Me???
September 22, 2003

Gerard Manley Hopkins, an English poet at the end of the 19th century, wrote:

*What I do is me
For this I came...*

With respect, I wish to differ with the estimable Father Hopkins, a Jesuit priest. I cannot identify my Self with my work. I see that when I do that, I get into trouble. I am more than my work. Jane is more than any work Jane has done.

Societal norms agree with Hopkins: a man is esteemed by virtue of his bank account, his accomplishments. A farmer is equal to the quality of the milk he sells, or the vegetables or wheat he grows. A woman is equal to her work, at home, in the schoolroom or hospital or office or courtroom.

At 72, my disagreement with both societal norms and Hopkin's philosophy as seen in his poem is important. At 72, the work falls away. My work now is contemplation and quiet prayer, vigorous physical activity to maintain health, lots of reading, and writing as opportunity arises.

We celebrate and adore the God of cosmic creation, but we know that work is only a mere reflection, as in a musty mirror, of God. I am not a pantheist: I see God in creation and know it is only a glimpse.

"Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Are the seventies and eighties (and more, please God!) time for us to become as little children: to live in the joy of the moment, and sleep hard when that time comes; to know one's Self cherished by friends and family without huge effort; to laugh a lot and cry easily? Is that the *work* given to us now?

Is this in fact the lovely kingdom of heaven which we prepare for by enjoying, now? *For this I came!*