

Luke 17.21

We focus on the first pillar of the good Rathkeale man in Term 1 – who can tell what it is?

Be at peace with your inner self.

I had a friend who told me that he got in touch with his inner self the other day. He said that was the last time he was going to buy cheap toilet paper.

What do we mean by “Inner self”? Do we have more than one self?

I think we definitely play different roles in different situations. I know that some of you say and do things in the classroom that you wouldn't say or do in front of your parents. I think that it is probably quite normal to play different roles in different situations. But that's probably not what we are talking about when we talk about our self.

Our self is the person we are talking about when we say: “I”

We might say: “I won my race at athletics”. So is our self our body? Well, the body changes, in fact every 7 years we have a completely new body; every cell has changed. And your body when you were 4 years old is very different from the body you have now. Did the “I” change too? Are you a different self from when you were 4? Or are you more than the body?

Are you your thoughts? Again, thoughts change, a lot. Are you still you when you are deep in sleep with no thoughts? Are you still you if you get amnesia and can't remember any of your old memories and thoughts? So are we more than just our thoughts?

Are we our feelings? Feelings change more than anything else about us. One minute we are happy because the bell goes for interval, then in 20 minutes we are sad because it goes for period 3. That's as true for teachers as it is for students. Does our self change with our feelings? Or is there something deeper than that, that we mean when we say “I”. Who is “I”?

At the moment, most of you are in an important stage of life where you are forming an identity. You are working out who you want to be in the world. It's a very important stage. But sometimes it can be a challenging stage, when we feel that perhaps our identity isn't as cool, or successful or popular as someone else's identity.

But underneath identity, which is really just about your body, your thoughts and your feelings, there is a deeper I, that remains unchanged, even though we may play around with different identities in our life. Like roles, our identity is actually not who we really are in our inner self.

So who or what is our inner self, then?

It is that part of us that is aware of our body, of our thoughts and feelings, of our roles, aware of our identity. It is mysterious because it is what sees everything, and therefore itself cannot really be seen.

This part of you is constant, it is unchanged by your experiences, it is the same from the moment you are born until the moment you die, and perhaps even after you die. It is what people call your soul, or sometimes your spirit. Most of you will be completely unaware of it, perhaps even for your whole life, unless your identity lets you down one day. Then you may look within for what never changes.

You have an inner self. And it is always at peace. Next week we will look at how we can bring our outer self into being at peace with our inner self.