

The "I" versus the "we!"

My husband George and I have been walking together every day for over ten years. Needless to say there have been many conversations during those times. Recently, we got into discussion about our culture and what guides us as we make political decisions, community decisions and personal decisions. George, a devoted student of languages, German as well as English, made the comment that it is interesting that we see it necessary to capitalize the pronoun, "I." We do not capitalize the pronoun "we," nor do we capitalize the article, "a." We came to the conclusion that it is because of our sense of self-importance. "I" is very important to us and we use the pronoun a great deal.

Reflecting on our use of language can lead us to understand why it is difficult for us to think about the community instead of the individual. We know that we are a country founded on the concept of personal dedication to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The individual is the most important in our culture and the "we" of things lags behind in our approach. So how does this stack up to the definition of what it means to be a Christian? When interviewing candidates for the celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation, I used to ask the young people, if you can be a Christian without belonging to a community of believers. They would almost always answer "yes." Then I reminded them to look at the book called the Acts of the Apostles, 4:42. "They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers." The verses that follow indicate that the early believers shared what they had with one another by way of material possessions. There was little room for "I" in the early Christian communities.

We hear so much rhetoric about being a Christian country, but I think we need to really ask ourselves, "Are we, or are we only an "I?"