

October 25, 2020

My dear Parishioners,

I was reflecting this week on the “face” of Christ, where and how do we see Him in this time of pandemic and what is required of us to see Him. One of the beatitudes answers: “Blessed are the pure of heart, they shall see God.” In a certain way, then, purity of heart, is a “condition precedent” to seeing His face if I might use a legal phrase. To the extent that our hearts are pure, to that extent will we see our God during a pandemic or not.

I once read that, taken as a whole, the beatitudes are a snapshot of Christ Himself. To see Christ then is to see the Christ of the beatitudes. For sure, Jesus was poor in spirit. He mourned for His friend Lazarus. He was meek and He hungered and thirsted for righteousness. He was pure of heart and a model peacemaker. And yes Jesus was persecuted unto death on a cross.

But what does it mean to have “purity of heart?”

In biblical language, the heart is both a place of lust (“But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Mt 5:28) and also a place of love (“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all you heart...” Mt 22:37) The heart is the core of our will, our thoughts, our knowledge, our decisions, our acts. When the Lord speaks of purity of heart, He means a heart, with all its dimensions, focused on Him and Him alone-- oneness of heart. As His disciples, our striving must always be to please the Lord, to be single-hearted, to concentrate on Him and His life-giving and transformative Word.

Sin, the mystery of sin, another name for impurity of heart, and not just sexual impurity, gets in the way, however. Sin blurs our vision of God. Dealing with sin is thus a precondition of seeing and coming to know and love the Lord for “Blessed (or happy) are the pure of heart, they shall see God.”

To rid ourselves of sin is happily not our work alone. It is a primarily the work of the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our sins. He sent the Holy Spirit among us, after all, for the forgiveness of sins. We must be predisposed, however. And that is a graced event. It is our yielding to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, our openness to the power of love that He pours into our hearts that we might be drawn closer to God. It is in our daily prayer that we come to know

everything, maybe that one perduring sin, which blocks our vision of God. When we confess that sin, our sins, we do so with the assurance that our sins will go away or lessen their pernicious hold on us.

I can not emphasize enough how important this process of repentance is in our efforts to see the face of Christ. Monthly confession, more often if necessary, helps each of us on our journeys with the Lord. As our hearts become purer and purer, and they will as we daily experience a conversion of heart, the face of God will become more and more clear for us to see, to know and to love—even in the midst of this pandemic which we are collectively experiencing. In the words, moreover, of St. Leo the Great, we will be able to feast serenely upon the great vision of God for blessed are the pure of heart, they shall see God.

Prayerfully in the Lord,

Monsignor Peter J. Vaghi
Pastor