

Msgr. Bill's Weekly Letter...

Dear Parishioners:

When Leonardo da Vinci was painting his masterpiece, *The Last Supper*, he looked for a model of the Christ. At last, he located a chorister in one of the churches of Rome who was lovely in life and features, a young man named Pietro Bandinelli. Years passed, and the painting was unfinished.

All the disciples had been painted except for — Judas Iscariot. Now Da Vinci started to look for a man whose face was hardened and distorted by sin — and at last he found a beggar on the streets of Rome with a face so villainous that Da Vinci shuddered when he looked at him.

He hired the man to sit for him as he painted the face of Judas on his canvas. When he was about to dismiss the man, Da Vinci said, “I have not yet found out your name.” “I am Pietro Bandinelli. I also sat for you as your model for Christ.” (Source unknown).

When you or I become fascinated with pleasure (turning stones to bread), or power (I will give you the kingdoms of the world), or irresponsibility (jump off the temple and the angels will save you) our vision and heart change. Jesus is teaching us that either God is first or I am first. If Jesus were to have given in, he would be placing himself above his Father.

Remember that in the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed that, if possible, that the cup of suffering be moved aside; he also gave in to his Father's will. There is nothing inherently wrong with pleasure, power, or not trusting in God, BUT when we give inordinate force to these elements, we lose proper perspective and dismiss our reason as persons.

God made us such that by the proper use of intellect and will, we can freely choose to follow Truth and Love to their divinely promised reward. But what we must do is put God first in everything. My spouse, my family, my children, my money, my house, my car, etc., etc., must always be behind my God. If I put any of those items before God, I am actually putting myself first because God told me not to do that. The great danger is that if I do move God out of first place, then anything or anyone else, can be put out of first place.

Today Jesus is teaching us to look beyond the boundaries of this life. Yes, we must live in this reality of being worldly bound, but we also are partly in the world to come. Our soul will live for the rest of eternity and so will our body live with the soul in the glorious beatific vision of our heavenly Father. He is the same Father who made the starry nights, the magnificent sunrises, beautiful sun sets, a newborn's smile, the laughter of children at play, and all the other beautiful wonders of creation.

He has told us that the glory of heaven is so much more than what we see now. Let us think about this beauty that has the power to move the heart. Hearts are moved more by beauty than logic or reason. Never forget that Satan knows God better than any of us but cannot love him and thus he turns away. Satan cannot see beauty for he is so insular in his being that his sin is blinded to beauty.

Our society, in some ways, makes that which has no beauty to be called beautiful. Some museums of modern art will feature a portrait of a toilet and say, “Wow!” How in heaven's name did that happen? Our fascination with sin changes our eyesight, not physically, but our heartfelt vision.

Jesus reveals a great beauty today in his rejection of pleasure, power, and irresponsibility, namely, his Father's exquisite heart of love for you and me. Our destiny is for life on high. We are made for a holiness of life and the experience of the great beauty who is God. Dante quotes Piccarda, “For in His will is our peace,” (Paradiso, 3:89).

This Lent, let us say, “No,” to pleasure, power, or irresponsibility to solve our problems. Let us allow our Lenten practices to get us past the mere practical to the beauty of saying, “Yes,” to our Father's great love. We have a great deal to lose and a greatness to achieve.

Have a great Lent.

Pace - bene

