

What does God see when he looks at you? Do you ever think about that? What does he feel? Who are you in the eyes of God? When I was on my retreat before getting ordained, my spiritual director had me pray with those questions. It was a very good way to pray, especially with a spiritual director available to talk things over periodically throughout the retreat. We can see this question reflected in today's readings.

The letter to the Hebrews tells us that the word of God--Jesus--is able to discern our reflections and the thoughts of our hearts. Everything is exposed to him; there is nothing that we can hide. We are always being scrutinized by God. That's actually kind of scary. There are a lot of thoughts that I'd just as soon nobody knows about, but we can't hide anything from God. But the idea that God has total access to all of our internal data is also beautiful. How can I say something is scary and beautiful at the same time?

Let's look at the Gospel. After Jesus told the rich man to observe the commandments, the man responded back, "Teacher, all of these I have observed from my youth." And Jesus what did Jesus do? He looked at him and loved him. Jesus probably already knew what the man's response was going to be. The man was going to walk away sad because he had many possessions. It wasn't the response that Jesus was inviting him to make, yet Jesus looked at him and loved him.

And Jesus does the same thing for each one of us. He knows everything about us--good, bad, and ugly. Everything. That is scary but it is also good. When he looks at us, he loves us. He loves us as we are but he loves us too much to let us stay that way. Because he knows us better than we know ourselves, he can bring to light the things that are keeping us separated from him. He doesn't want us to be separated from him. He died for us so that our sins can be wiped away. And he also gave us the Eucharist so that we can be reunited with him every time we receive Holy Communion. He wouldn't have done any of that if he didn't love us.

How do we respond to him? In a commentary on today's Gospel one writer said that if the young man had seen the way Jesus was looking at him, he would have immediately sold everything and returned to Jesus as fast as he could. But instead his face fell; he didn't see the look in Jesus' eyes. He was too focused on material things. Don't we often do the same thing? Jesus is looking at us, loving us, calling to us but what are we doing? Chances are we are looking down at our phones or our minds are on the football game or all the

chores waiting for us at home. We don't see the love in Jesus' eyes because we aren't looking at him.

There are a lot of people out there, maybe even in here, who feel unwanted, unloved, and unlovable. They haven't seen the look in Jesus' eyes. Maybe they were driven away from the church by the scandals, many people have been. A lot of people just drift away on their own, not because they intend to but because they just get distracted and lose sight of Jesus. Even those of us here today probably struggle with this. We get distracted by our attachments to the things of the world. These can include possessions, personal beliefs and ideas, people, and various activities. These things are not evil--God created them so they CAN'T be evil--it's our attachment to them that is the problem. Our attachment to material things causes us to lose our focus. God is no longer the center of our world because we have turned ourselves or other things into god and made them the center of our world.

One of the reasons why we lose our focus on God is that we live busy lives; we become too busy to pray and develop our relationship with God and know how much he loves us. We can look to the saints as role models in helping us keep God as the center of our world. With the exception of the Blessed Mother, they were sinners just like us yet they overcame their failures, learned from them, and now they are with God in heaven. They can teach us to do the same thing.

The question for us today is, how do we respond to Jesus when he looks at us and loves us? Do we respond with love or do we say, "sorry Lord, I'm busy now; I'll get back to you when I can." Mother Teresa has been quoted as saying two things about busy lives. "If you are too busy to pray, pray harder." She also said "If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy."

Take some time to examine your day. Where do we put our priorities? Most of us can find time for Netflix or watching sports or going out for coffee and a million other things, yet we say we are too busy to pray. If that describes you--and yes, it definitely describes me--we need to change our priorities. It'll be painful at first; it'll take some adjustment but it can be done. If we keep God as the center of our world we can accomplish the goal. And there is no better goal than heaven.