

BEHOLD

Let the Lord put your heart on fire



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**Mirar al Señor,
contemplar lo,
es una invitación
a entrar dentro
del misterio de
su persona.**

In the liturgy of the Eucharist, I want to call your attention to the words the priest says when he holds up the Body of Christ: “Behold, the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world.”

We do not use the word “behold” very much, but it is a beautiful word, and it is a beautiful thing to do. The previous translation of the Liturgy stated it this way – “This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” The change is closer to the Latin word *ecce* and is more a command than a declaration. “Behold” is a word that means “stop and look.”

The word behold is essential. In adoration, for example, when we are with the Blessed Sacrament, people often ask me, “Bishop, what am I supposed to do when the Sacrament is exposed?” The answer is “behold,” because the Lord shows himself to us, but we must stop to gaze at him to see.

“Behold” is what Mary of Bethany, Lazarus’ sister, did when she would sit at the feet of the Lord. Meanwhile, her sister Martha was upset because Mary wasn’t helping her with the chores, or to make the dinner, but the Lord said, “Martha, don’t worry so much. Mary has chosen the better part.” In other words, before any more activity, we must behold him.

We live in an activity focused culture. We like to do things, and we like to see results. The Christian life, too, involves doing things, but before anything, behold and let the Lord show himself to you. And you may say, “What does it mean – the Lord shows himself?”

You must live it to describe it. Words do not capture it well. It is like looking at a flower. If you stare at it long enough, it eventually opens, but not right away. I guarantee that if you stare at a rose for a while, you may see nothing is happening, and then you turn away, and when you turn back, you notice something changed.

There is a way the Lord shows himself when we behold him, and it is about entering into the mystery of who he is. It is a way of knowing him that is saturated with love, which is a higher way of knowing than book-knowing. Love-knowing is higher in the Christian way of looking at things.

Mirar al Señor, contemplarlo, es una invitación a entrar dentro del misterio de su persona.

When sitting in adoration, for example, you might think, “No great idea has come to me.” Do not worry about that. Just behold, and, if you do that, over time you will notice the difference after you have beheld him. Because he shows himself and he leaves a trace in

you. That’s how prayer works. We are often not really aware of it until later. We have to behold him first. Otherwise, we won’t see.

Es una impresión que el Señor imprime en el corazón.

The Gospel of John 14:6-14, starts with, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Why does Jesus say that to Thomas? Because before that, Thomas the Apostle heard Jesus say, “You know where I am going, and you know the way.”

Thomas says, “Lord, really, we do not know where you are going. How could we know the way?” Jesus responds, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” What the Lord was saying to Thomas is, “Look at me! Just behold,” and you will see how I am the way. St. Paul says, “In Christ are all the treasures, the hidden treasures of the mystery of the mercy of God.”

The Gospel of John continues: Jesus says, “And the Father is in me, and I am in the Father, and from now on, you know the Father, and you have seen him.”

Now it is Philip’s turn. “Lord, show us the Father.” Jesus responds: “Philip, you have been with me this long. You have been in my company, you have been beholding me, and stand where I am standing. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”

Again, it is the same thing. You do see the Father; you just do not know that you have seen the Father. The two go together. The answer he gives to Thomas, and the answer he gives to Philip, the answer he gives to both of them is, “I am. Behold, and you will see. Sit still. Be in my company. Follow me and look at me. Look. And you will know the way, and you will see the Father.” This is so foreign to our hyper-busy world that wants the answers in a click on the internet.

The Lord is opening himself to his disciples, and that includes us. What he was complimenting about Mary of Bethany, sitting at the feet of Jesus as Martha was busy, was that she was looking at him, hearing him. That is the only way into the mystery of his love and of his mission.

You and I, and the whole Catholic world, can read all the books about evangelization, about the mission and about how to share the Gospel. But the Lord says, “Quiet. Look at me. And you will know the way.”

What is the way? It is the way to the Father, which is the only place we need to be going. And when he says,

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"You have seen the Father if you have seen me," he is saying, "As you go to the Father, as I go to the Father, the Father is already with you, because he is in me. Do you see?"

The question the Lord is always asking us, but we are so busy we do not hear, is, "Do you see?"

There are many times in the Gospel of John when the disciples ask the Lord a question, and Jesus doesn't respond directly to the question. His response makes them think again. This is how he responds to Thomas and Philip. He is saying, "Just look. Behold the Lamb of God." The full manifestation of "I am the Way," and the full manifestation of "If you have seen me, you see the Father" is the lifting up of Christ in the mystery of his passion, death, and resurrection. It is the way of knowing through love. No book can teach us that. It is about spending time with him. It is about looking up. It is also about hearing him.

Again, in response to people who ask what to do before the Blessed Sacrament: I say, simply sit, behold, listen. Read quietly the Gospel. Let the words linger in you. In the presence of the Blessed Sacrament this is what beholding him means. In his presence we hear his Word in the inner chamber of our hearts. The rosary is another way. With the Sacrament we take in the mysteries, beholding the Lord in different moments of his life. As St. John Paul II would

often remind us, it is the contemplative prayer of the Church. We behold the mysteries. For example, the Annunciation – just behold. The angel of the Lord appeared to Mary.

I also suggest, if you have any time to spend with the Lord but you cannot visit the Sacrament, you can still behold him. As Jesus says, "Go to your room, close the door, and speak to your Father." Have the Gospel in your hand and memory. Read the Lord's word. He says to us, "My Word, is in you." You hear it. Read it. Close your eyes, and you behold it. The Lord is very close. He shows himself to us.

The Lord says, "This is the way of Church. There is no other way." It takes us back to the heart of everything, which is the Lord himself and the way he shows himself to us and continues to show himself to us. It is a journey of the heart. It is a sitting quietly and beholding him, and he changes us, quietly, like the gentle shower that makes the flowers grow.

I think it is important for us all to go back to the heart of everything. Just stop and behold and he will show us the way, and we will see into the mystery of his love.

My prayer is that you will take some time to let the Lord put your heart on fire, and the only way we can do that is if we behold him. When we behold him he enkindles our heart. Whatever you do, whatever your responsibilities, whatever your work for the mission, it will come to you. Do not worry. Jesus says, "I have overcome the world." He will do the rest.

Behold, the Lamb of God: "I am the way." □



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