

18 April 2021, The Third Sunday of Easter: I John 3:1-7

I grew up in the “age of home movies.” Especially on vacations, there was dad with his trusty 8mm movie camera, capturing all the ‘action.’ Watching one’s own home movies was fun. Seeing others’ home movies—not so much, which is probably why the age of home movies did not last. However, we are now in the ‘age of social media.’

We see our own videos or photos differently than someone else’s. For example, we see a photo of a friend’s cute child on the internet and are touched; our reaction is different, deeper when the picture is of one’s own child or grandchild. There are different ways of seeing.

In the Bible there are three ways of seeing. The first is the everyday sense: seeing as observing: ‘I see it is raining.’ A second sense of seeing is when we apply the mind in comprehension. ‘I see what you are saying’ or ‘I see how to fix the problem.’

The third way of seeing in the Bible, and in human experience, is far beyond the first two; this seeing involves the ability to engage with the highest sensitivities of the soul; a way of interpreting revelation (not just receiving it); an inner extra-rational faculty that comprehends the underlying truth of all reality; this seeing involves awareness and intuition, wisdom, and love that is deeper than mere observation, beyond rationalism; this way of seeing transforms human beings. Indeed, this kind of seeing is indispensable to conversion. In today’s second reading, John is writing of this third way: *See, what love the Father has given us...Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be, has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when He is revealed, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is* (vv. 1a & 2).

We will see with more than the eyes and mind, beyond mere eyesight and understanding. Terms such as “spiritual” or “mystical” characterize such sight. We will be like Jesus because we will see Him *as He is*, we will enter the reality of God’s eternal, sacrificial love, transformed by and into who Jesus is. We will, on a diminutive level, see Jesus from God’s perspective with the core of our being, and be changed.

My favorite theologian, Julian of Norwich wrote: *Truth sees God, and wisdom contemplates God, and of these two comes the third, and that is a marvelous delight in God, which is love.*

The third spiritual way of seeing brings results beyond the first two: joy, awe, delight which are sweet and encouraging. From the third, mystical way of seeing also emerges self-awareness, desire, and love. To ‘see’ Christ always results in also seeing ourselves in and through Christ. We cannot help but see our double-mindedness and double-heartedness in contrast to Christ’s single-minded yearning to embrace us, Christ’s single-hearted love-longing for us. The deep seeing of oneself in Christ does not produce guilt and shame but joy, seeing the truth about the self in the context of Christ’s awesome love for us, Jesus’ complete desire for us; and so, we become free, anxious to offer ourselves in love to Christ yet more deeply.

Such deep self-offering springs from our desire to see Christ ever more clearly, to know Christ more deeply, to follow Christ more devotedly. We taste the goodness of Jesus, and such sweetness is irresistible because it touches our deepest longing for union with the Divine, with ourselves and with others. Such union issues from an immersion in love, in which one’s love for Christ is expectantly offered and Christ’s love for oneself and all creation is decisively received.

...all who have this hope in Christ purify themselves, just as he is pure. We want what we are to be in harmony with who we are. Having begun to see Jesus and his love for us, sin and hypocrisy are abhorrent because they blind us to the divine vision of Love’s encompassing, eternal reality.

How do we to see? In and through Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of sight. Seeing begins with desire to see more deeply. Do not be satisfied with the lesser ways of seeing; do not settle for partial vision. Especially when in darkness, depression, or despair, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the gift of sight, to see Christ in your life and others’ lives. Jesus will heal us, in his way and in his perfect time. To be healed of blindness, you must want your spiritual eyes opened; ask for healing and look intently.

See! We are God’s own children now; you are God’s beloved, Christ’s treasure, the Holy Spirit’s delight; you are the glory of the Blessed and Glorious Holy Trinity. We need not worry either about what we have been or shall be. See! You are Christ’s own for ever!

Blessing and honor, thanksgiving and praise, more than we can offer, more than we can conceive, be yours, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by all angels, all mortals, all creatures, now and for ever. Amen.