

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – October 13 & 14, 2018 – Reflection

A youngish man came up to Jesus once and wanted to know what he should do to gain eternal life. Jesus didn't break any new ground with him, telling him simply to keep the commandments. That was the path to eternal life. But the man was persistent, he wanted more from Jesus so he told the Lord that he had tried to keep the commandments ever since he was a little boy; and, in a beautiful line the Gospel writer says, "Jesus, looking at him, loved him."

Our Lord looked at that man who was trying so hard to be good, to be fair, to be kind, and He loved him. Wow ... to be loved by God and to see it, to know it, to feel it ... that must've really been something!

Last week when I was in Pennsylvania for a few days, I had the chance to read a long sermon given by Pastor Stephen Van Kuiken at the Lake Street church in Evanston, Illinois. He told his listeners that it was important that they see themselves as God sees them. To help them, he introduced them to a kind of spiritual exercise for them to try and practice.

He invited them ... sit in a quiet place, no distractions, close your eyes, and practice seeing yourself as God would see you. Sometimes it might be helpful to start big - picture the stars, the big blue planet of Earth. Get closer - see the deserts, the mountains, the farms, the cities. See the people, the crowds, the faces, each as God would see them, with love and compassion, with tenderness and attention. And then, there

you are in the distance. You get closer. You are now seeing yourself through God's eyes. You are so valuable, so precious, so important.

Well, if you're anything like me, you could picture most of the vision just fine: the stars and blue Earth, the mountains and deserts, the people and the crowds, but that last part, the part where I got in the picture, that's when the system crashed and the screen went blank!!

Why is this exercise so hard for me ... so hard for most God-fearing people ... why do we have so much trouble seeing ourselves with the love that God sees us? Most of us are so hard on ourselves and when we look at ourselves, it's not through the loving, caring eyes of God at all. No, we see ourselves through the eyes of a very harsh critic, a critic that sees every little fault and weakness, every past failure and hidden secret, every mistake and shortcoming. And, because so many of us hate what we see in ourselves, we hate it when we see it in another and lash out at them when we're really disappointed in ourselves. None of that really builds up a person, a family, a community, a country, a world of love and tolerance. It just makes a mad, mad, mad, mad world!

If I can't see myself as God sees me, how can I ever see another as God sees them?

I've known my Mom now for 64 years, all of my life, thanks be to God. Over the years she's told me to eat my vegetables, brush my teeth, clean my room, do my homework, say my prayers, watch my mouth, stop speeding, drinking, complaining. Now I see her once a week on Fridays for lunch. Every time I walk into the room where she's sitting, she doesn't tell me what to do, she doesn't bring up my faults or go digging through the past. When she sees me, her face lights up and she says, "Hi, honey! I'm so glad you're here!"

When I try to picture how *God* sees me, maybe I should picture my Mom's eyes on those Friday visits instead of my eyes in my hypercritical self-inquisitions!