

Church of the Good Shepherd
and
St. John the Evangelist

11 Pentecost
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Fr. Bill McGinty

“Show Me God!”

This week late at night, I was sitting, pen in hand, trying to describe the awesome majesty and beauty of God. I thought of things that take my breath away: ‘the dew on a rose in a misty frosted morning;’ the way a sailboat cuts through the surf on a windy day; the flight of the Osprey as it glides silent before plunging into the loch to emerge salmon in its talons, water falling like diamond crystal in the early morning light.

No matter how beautiful or awesome these images I seem to sense that nothing can capture the true essence of God. It might mirror some aspect of his goodness, power, or beauty, but only as a secondary source of evidence that our God had indeed passed this way.

Somehow I wanted to come closer to a description of God that for us would be understandable. Genesis tells us that we are made in God’s image.

“So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him.”

Maybe, I thought, if we really want a vision of God, we should look at man as God meant him to be. Just like you, a lot of people have crossed my line of vision in the last fifty years. If we are truthful, we will admit that people fascinate us more than anything else. It is why we watched Johnny Carson, still watch Larry King or even Sixty Minutes. People, their characters, personalities and achievements hold our attention like nothing else does. People are the height of God’s Creation and somehow they speak to us of the essence of God himself.

Yet, how well do we ever get to know a person or each other? In our own lives, maybe some of our family, a spouse and our children.

In the early sixties I had a High School Principal who came as close to God as a twelve year old could imagine at the time. His name was Joe Devine. He was six foot five, tall for the time, and he was kind, considerate and a deeply spiritual man. Joe had the ability to nurture and bring the best out of young people. He was quick to praise and generous to a fault. We all admired, feared him, loved him and feared for him, all at the same time. He had vision, purpose, dignity and humility. But when he knelt to pray, we saw a man who truly loved his God and sought to serve him. The image of Joe still speaks to me of God, but for all the years I knew him, he was in some part mystery.

I think it important that those we admire and even love are in some part mystery and remain that way. God himself is in large part mystery, but that does not detract from our love and worship of him. The Hebrew people knew this when they wrote in the Psalms:

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“O Lord, you search me and you know me. You know my sitting down and rising up. Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?”

We could reflect and examine a hundred friends and acquaintances and only catch a ‘glimpse of God’. It is when we turn our attention inward that we come face to face with God himself. Sometimes, we don’t want to do that because when we meet God we come face to face with truth; we come face to face with our real selves. That is more than some of us can bear.

For if God dwells anywhere, he dwells within each one of us. In that indwelling he seeks to unite with our spirit. At times we prefer to fight that, especially if uniting with God gets in the way of our other pursuits: selfishness, greed, anger, envy. They all play a part in keeping God at arms length. Each of us knows that now and then God breaks through. He touches the core of our being.

“We hunger for his presence like a dry weary land without water!”

In that moment we see ourselves as God sees us, both lovable and loving. We see ourselves as we can be striped of our masks, roles and trappings. We see God’s vision of us and who we are meant to be. ‘Cause when we listen and hear God speak to us it is a kind of knowing that touches each of us deeply.

For us who are older, these moments come more frequent. We can see the end of the tunnel. There are more years behind us than ahead. We know that we are not immortal. More and more we cherish the times in our life where God touches us. We want to grow that moment and dwell on it. So now we are a little more sentimental; we seek the quiet of the fishing stream; we search out the quiet beach; the lonely walk; we dally over the page of a book. In our hearts we have decided where the ‘real me’ resides. For there we hear the tapping at the door and we are all too glad to let God in. For now we know he is actively seeking us.

For it is only our God who seems to understand and make sense of our lives. At times we don’t. ‘Fifty years in the same office!’ What did it mean? ‘Four kids, two live in California, one in Arizona and the youngest in Alaska.’ What did it mean? Beyond all our questions; long passed all our crash sites, God manages to ease himself between our guilt and appraisal, triumph and denial! For if we have lived our lives to this moment unaware of his presence - we have lived our life a “stranger” to ourselves.

If our God has a ‘calling card’, if our God has an I.D. it is revelation! God will reveal and he will reveal ourselves to ourselves, naked, bare, warts, ambitions, faults and all.

“My God is a small voice, a calm influence; my God is prudence’s choice!”

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“This is who you are!” says God. “Now in my name go seek your salvation. Now is the time for Baptism that you may wash away the grime of this veil of tears and put on a robe of goodness.”

It is time to become yourself. It is time to see yourself as others see you - reject it, and strive to become as God sees you! Do that and meeting God face to face may not seem so bad.

I believe that if we ever become all that we can be; if we can put aside ambition and self; if we can accept God's picture, then we begin to see God.

Look around and see the diversity of our God. Look around this dabbled, mottled kaleidoscope of a church. If we are made in God's image then our God is an ever changing complexity. Look around and you have to love, not what we share in common, but what is different about each one of us. God is a celebration of difference and variety. ‘A machine can turn out things the same.’ Only God can turn out things, different, unique, unpredictable, strange and not interchangeable.

“Your uniqueness is the fingerprint of God's infinite creativity. Your destiny is the fulfillment of God's plan for you.” But, only if we turn inward and read the words God has written on our soul! Hear the words he is whispering in our ear, the way you would someone in a deep coma.

As we celebrate this Eucharist let us do so with praise and thanksgiving for the mystery of our God.

In the first reading the prophet: Nehemiah warns the people not to ‘stiffen their necks’ against their God. For God is a God of love and mercy. St. Paul in the second reading strikes a purple passage in Romans 8 and asks this question: “ who can separate us from the love of Christ? The answer is that no one can! Nothing can defeat or overcome us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, because our God is an indwelling God who dwells within each one of us.

“He is there because he wants to be there when we awake to the fact that he guarded our sleeping till we awoke to him as Father!”

Show me your best self, and I will hold up a mirror and show you your God. Show me the God within you, and I will show you your best self!

Here now in this place show me bread and show me wine and friends to share it with and I will tell you: “here dwells your God. Here dwells your better self.” Finding our God we worship and glorify him and praise his name.

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But! It is not enough. It is never enough. It is never over till we take our God out to others. For Jesus in today's Gospel says: "They need not go away. You give give them something to eat!"

It is never over because we carry our indwelling God with us. He is the heartbeat of our soul; he is our mind's best reasoning; he is the cement of our love and friendship for one another; he is the aloneness we seek; he is our constant companion who when all else fails, when all else deserts us - he alone remains. He is the prayer that speaks our soul, grows our being, guides each of us till breathing our last breath, we return to Him; Spirit of our spirit, that we may dwell in him as he once dwelt in us. Then we shall know all things, be all things and forever and ever.

Amen +

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