

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? We can see these questions reflected in today's readings.

The letter to the Hebrews tells us that the word of God--Jesus, he's the word of God, right?--is able to discern our reflections and the thoughts of our hearts. Everything is exposed to him; there is nothing that we can hide. God has access to all of our internal data. He knows everything we have ever done, everything we are doing and thinking and everything we will do or think. How does that make you feel? What does God see when he looks at you?

We can find the answer to this in 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 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. Jesus didn't just love him, though, he *agapaoed* him. *Agapao*. The Greeks had at least six words for love. The ones that we are most familiar with are: *eros* (romantic love), *philia* (deep friendship), and *agape*. *Agapao* is the verb form of *agape* and *agape* is the type of love that Jesus showed when he died on the cross. *Agapao* is the word used in John 3:16: God so loved the world--God so *agapao* the world--that he gave his only Son...*Agapao* love, *agape* love is self-sacrificing, self-emptying, it holds nothing back--that's the way Jesus loved this young man. Jesus knew what was in this guy's heart. He knew he wasn't going to be happy about selling his possessions and giving them to the poor; but that didn't matter. Jesus loved him. He loved him to the point of death.

And this is how he loves each one of us. He knows everything about us--good, bad, and ugly. Everything. But when he looks at us, he loves us. He *agapao*s us. He loves us so much that he died for us. He loves us so much that he has given us the Eucharist so that we can be reunited with him everytime we receive Holy Communion.

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, 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. But I think a lot of people just drift away on their own. I wasn't raised as a Catholic but I was raised in a Christian home. I drifted away. I got busy with sports. I got busy with school and then with work. I took my eyes off Jesus. Even in seminary, there were lots of times when I took my eyes off Jesus and couldn't see the love radiating from his face when he looked at me. Like the rich man in the gospel, I was distracted by my attachment to material things. The material things of the world 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. Keeping God at the center of our world is part of a quote from my good buddy and spiritual big brother Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati. Pier Giorgio was a busy guy. He was an engineering student. He was involved in all sorts of Catholic student organizations. He was a member of a couple different Saint Vincent de Paul Societies. He gave tons of time and money to serving the poor. And he loved to climb mountains with his friends. He loved the mountains. But none of these things ever took the place of God. It was a simple matter of priorities. If his friends wanted to climb a mountain on a weekend, Pier Giorgio always made arrangements to have a priest join them or he made sure there was a place they could attend Mass. If that couldn't happen, he wouldn't go climbing. He was just an ordinary guy like any one of us gathered here today. He came from a dysfunctional family. He wasn't the best student. He got distracted, bored, and angry. He got depressed. But he always kept God at the center of his world. In fact, he said that the flame that fed the fire of all his activity was prayer and Eucharistic Adoration. He knew where his priorities had to be.

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. 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.