

“We Would Like to See Jesus”

Homily of April 2, 2006

by Fr. Brian Timoney

There's a great richness in the Scripture readings today. I have just chosen one short sentence to reflect on for you. It is: “we would like to see Jesus.”

Now, you may very well be quite content with your life. You have loving parents, devoted and supportive spouse, good children, and absolutely adorable grandchildren. You have faithful friends, a satisfying job, and you certainly wish such a condition for each and every one of you. But has there ever been a time, even a very brief moment, when you have reflected, “Is that all there is?... Is this all that life has to offer? Is there nothing more?” And if these are like questions that have ever crossed your mind, however fleetingly, you may very well be echoing the great cry of St. Augustine, “You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” We are, after all, spiritual beings and so, our ultimate satisfaction, our ultimate happiness can be found only in God.

“We would like to see Jesus.” What a depth of longing there is in that sentence, in that request! The question is, “Is that a realistic request today? ... I want to see Jesus. I would like to see Jesus.” We Christians say “Yes!” not of course that we would see him in the flesh that once walked the roads of Palestine. He died, he rose from the dead and now has a glorified body that even his friends did not recognize. But we believe that we can see Jesus, in sacred Scripture, in the sacraments, but above all, as he himself told us in Matthew 25, I am recognizable in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, those in prison. That's his own word. “Whatever you do for the least of my brothers and sisters you do for me.” In other words, if you want to see Jesus today, just walk over to our gym because today and every evening and night this coming week we are hosting the homeless at our gym. He said it himself. If you want to see Jesus, you don't have to walk very far.

Paradoxically, it may be easier to see Jesus in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the imprisoned, than it is to see him in our family members, in our friends, our fellow students, our co-workers because we see their faults and we see their human failings. We see at times their very un-Christ-like behavior. And this is a very big challenge for us, to see Christ in everybody. The Book of Genesis tells us that we, all of us, are made in the image and likeness of God. And St. Paul tells us that we are one body, and that that one body is the Body of Christ, the Body of Christ. We are preparing now for Easter joy. We are very, very suppressing our desire to sin. Alleluia. And our joy will be in the resurrected glory of the body of Christ. But that Easter body, that resurrected, glorious body of Christ is us. We are that Body of Christ. So, our Easter joy will be joy in or through another.

“I want to see Jesus.” Look around you! Look around you. He is here present in every single human being. Well, wait a minute! Did I say “every single human being?” Well then that must be in myself. Surprise! I see Jesus in myself? We are so used to being told that we are bad, so used to beating up on ourselves that we forget the words of Jesus. He said, “If anyone loves me, my Father will love that person and we will come to that person and we will make our abode, our home, with that person.” Those are the words of Jesus. “If anyone loves me... “ That must mean you and me because you are here. If you didn't love Jesus you would not be here right now. “If you love me, my Father will love you and we will come to you. We will live with you.” We are the temples of the Holy Spirit. God is living in us. If you want to see Jesus, look in the mirror. The Lord is living within us. We must believe this. And that, surely, should bring us wonderful, wonderful joy every day of our lives, that rejoicing in the presence of Jesus within us.

Is there a price for seeing Jesus? Is there a price for such lifelong joy? “You have made us for yourself, O

and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” Restlessness itself indicates some anxiety, some pain, a very least the pain of unfulfillment. And, beyond that, there may be more. Unless the grain of wheat falls earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit. There has to be in us death, a death to selfishness, a death to self-absorption, a death to self-indulgence if we are to be alive to reality of Christ visible in ourselves and in every single human being. So, this time of Lent is intended to be an eye-opener so that we may see Jesus and experience the joy of his risen presence this coming Easter. Amen