

Corpus Christi B 2018 SML
MK 14:12-16, 22-26

Whenever you look intently at something, or stare at it or gaze at something that holds your attention, whether it is a person, an animal, a thing of beauty or just something strange, we are caught up with what is before us. There is an encounter, the sight is noteworthy, and it stays in our minds.

I've said many times I've been blest with my mother's eyes. It took nothing more than a look from her to get our attention, to stop us dead in our tracks. Some of the Sisters who taught me had the same look. All it takes is a look.

In the New Testament, several words are translated in English as "beholding" or "gazing" or "staring," and in context, often what the person sees causes transformation. There are several times in the Acts of the Apostles where the onlookers saw the miracles performed by Peter and John, or by Paul, and they were all left speechless.

Yet the most striking use of "gaze upon" or "behold" in the New Testament is always in reference to Our Blessed Lord. John the Baptist's cry at the waters of the Jordan, announcing the public life of Our Blessed Lord is recorded in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. "Behold (in other words, look,

gaze upon, stare at) the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” The next day, the same thing happened. John the Baptist “watched” Jesus and then told the crowd to watch Him. “Behold the Lamb of God!” And a few verses later, Jesus looks at (the word in Latin is *implebo* – it was a careful looking over) Peter and says, “You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Kephas, which is rendered Peter.” (JN 1:42)

Similarly, in the courtyard by the fire, after Jesus is arrested, the maid gave Peter the same careful looking over. Again, the word is “*implebo*.” The gospel says, “The maid looked intently at him and said, ‘You too were with the Nazarene, Jesus.’” (MK 14:47)

And, after Peter denied Jesus a third time, Luke tells us that Jesus turned and looked intently at Peter. (LK 10:61)

“Gaze upon” or “behold” is recorded again during the crucifixion of Our Blessed Lord. The bystanders, officials, and the women all “behold,” they all “watch” what is happening.

- ✓ The people stood by and watched (LK 23:35)
- ✓ All the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened (LK 23:48) and as they watched,
 - The rulers sneered at Him
 - The bystanders beat their breasts

- The women watched from a distance

In His salvific act of self-giving on the cross, Jesus is exposed to their gaze.

However, in Eucharistic exposition, in Eucharistic adoration, when we gaze upon the Lord, it is we who are exposed. We expose everything in our lives before Him, knowing nothing will be hidden from Him. And that is a good thing, because I'm sure that you, like me, would love to be able to take whatever it is, whatever "this" is, and have Our Blessed Lord take a good hard look at "it." And if "this" is something that comes between you and God, let's have Our Lord take a look at "it" and get rid of "it."

In this beautiful exchange of God gazing at you, and you gazing at God in Eucharistic adoration, great things can happen, if we let it. And that's key. Here's what I mean.

In the gospel of Mark, we have the well known story of the rich young man. This young man, had the world by the tail. But his eyes were still sad. So the man in Mark's gospel approaches Our Blessed Lord, and Mark specifically says that Jesus "looking at him, loved him." Jesus looked at the young man in the gospel and could see he had sad eyes. Jesus said, "You are lacking one thing and that's me. So get rid of

everything you own.” In other words, put me first. And that the young man could NOT do, and he went away, not happy, but sad. He went away with eyes as sad as when he came. It’s the only gospel account in which a specific request to follow Our Blessed Lord, was refused. The young man made a clear choice, the wrong choice, and he went away sad.

On the other hand, we have another story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, a short runt of a guy, who was so desperate, he climbed a tree to see Jesus. His intention was to “see Jesus,” for sure. We’re not so sure Zacchaeus’ intention was for Jesus to see him, but how could He not? But Zacchaeus was exposed, and see Zacchaeus Jesus did, and He calls him to conversion. Zacchaeus does not refuse, and his life was radically changed and given direction, turning toward justice and inner peace.

Again in the gospel, we read a dramatic story of the woman with the hemorrhage. She suffered for many years, and she tries to touch Jesus without being known, in a desperate hope for healing. She is healed, but only after she is exposed to Jesus. “She fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.” The woman wanted healing, perhaps a “magical” kind with no personal encounter. But Jesus called her forward so

she could be exposed to Him, and He exposed to her, and Jesus heals her not only physically, but spiritually and emotionally. The same is true for us. In Eucharistic adoration, Jesus wants to go beyond what we think we want, to what we really need, and that is all of Him.

Go to the Samaritan woman at the well, living a life less than favorable to Our Blessed Lord. “Go, call you husband.” “I do not have a husband.” Jesus said, “You’re right. The fact is you have had five husbands and you’re just living with the one you’re with now. You didn’t even bother to marry this one.” What kind of life is that, looking for love in all the wrong places? So Jesus exposed Himself to the woman, and exposes the woman’s messed up life to Himself – letting her know He’s got her number, strips away any pretensions, which, for her, was a good thing. Her life was given direction. She went out and told others about Him. “I just met a man who told me everything I ever did.”

I could go on with examples of those in scripture who looked at Jesus, and Jesus looked at them.

Gazing is a contemplative activity. As we sit or kneel in Eucharistic adoration, we engage in a particularly Catholic form of contemplative prayer. We learn to gaze lovingly upon, and

be gazed upon by Our Blessed Lord. To adore, says St. Gregory of Nazianzen, means to raise a “hymn of silence” to God.

Xaverian Father Franco Sottocornola says it this way:

Silence is one suggested form of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Too seldom do we stop and listen to the silence of Christ in the sacrament of the Altar preserved in the Tabernacle. The eternal Word of God in His death has become silent . . . The sacramental silence of the broken bread in the Tabernacle of God’s presence to us is an invitation to go beyond all words, all imagination and all images, beyond all that divides or separates, beyond all objects to the perfect communion of life and love (with Him).”

As you know, St. Mary of the Lakes is readying to begin yet another venue, a Most Blessed Venue in the Most Blessed Sacrament with Eucharistic adoration: the opportunity to come before our Blessed Lord, 24/7, at any time, to pray, to read, to cry, to look, to behold, to gaze, to watch, to be exposed, to be silent. Why? To give your life better direction, to sharpen the pencil, to zero in, on Jesus. Who here wouldn’t want that?

To use verbiage from Christ Life, our small group ministry, so we can:

- ✓ Discover Christ, and then
- ✓ Follow Christ and, and then
- ✓ Share Christ.

To use verbiage from a very popular song from Godspell,

- ✓ To see Thee more clearly
- ✓ Love Thee more dearly
- ✓ Follow Thee more nearly.