

Second Sunday of Lent B – 2015

If you've ever taken a plane trip, you may have noticed that people on a plane have a lot in common with people sitting in a pew in church...Some of them are dozing...Some are gazing out the window or are reading something...A few are only half-listening to the person at the microphone...A few are talking or giggling...But most are well-behaved except for maybe the real little ones....And the expressions on the faces of people on a plane and people in a pew are pretty similar...There are some who look a little cranky,...some who actually look happy to be where they are...The rest are pretty much expressionless, just kind of hoping for a NICE experience...You know, no surprises, no delays, ...so that when it's over, they can exit the plane saying, "It was a nice flight," or leave church saying, "It was a nice service."Now, that might be ok for a plane trip...I mean we all want a smooth flight,...no turbulence, ...just get us to the terminal pretty much on time,...right? ...But, when we come to Mass, when we come to worship God, shouldn't we want more than just a NICE experience and getting out on time? ...Shouldn't we come wanting more than that?

We should be like the little boy that was on the same flight as Christian writer Max Lucado. Max tells about how the boy is boarding the plane,..and he asks the attendant, "Would I be able to meet the pilot?"...And the pilot leans out of the cockpit and says, "If you're looking for me, come on in."...Then, with his mom's ok, the boy enters the cockpit's world of controls and lights and gauges. ...Minutes later, He comes out of the cockpit with plastic wings pinned to his shirt ...and a face radiant with wonder and joy, ... exclaiming, "Wow!...I got to meet the pilot!"...And thru-out the flight and as he exits the plane, that boy's face never stopped beaming with wonder and joy...He had met the pilot...He had met the one in charge...He had come looking for more than a NICE experience...and he got it.

My friends, when we come to worship, we should come looking for more than just a nice experience...We should come hungry...come ready...come willing...come expecting God to speak to us...to touch us. ...We should come asking, "Can I meet the pilot – the one in charge – God?"...If we come here in that spirit,...we'll discover that one of the main purposes of worship is to change the face of the worshiper...to create faces that are radiant with wonder and joy. ...This is what happened to Jesus that day He took Peter, James, and John up that mountain to stand in the presence of God...to worship God....to meet the One in charge....Jesus' very face was transfigured, ...His face became bright like the sun.

Our face is the most visible part of our bodies...and the most recognizable part...When we take photos of people, we don't photograph their feet rather than their faces...do we?...No one would recognize them...Though I'm sure my wife Cathy would tell you she'd recognize my ugly big toes anywhere...And our face is the number one way we show what's going on inside – our feelings and our emotions. **(For us Italians – though – I'd have to say that our hands come in a close 2nd)**...God wants to use our face – the most visible and expressive part of our body – to display His glory for others to see....just as He transfigured the face of His Son on that mountain to reveal His glory to Peter, James, and John.

It's God's job to change our face,...but it ain't easy...The guy who carved the faces on Mt Rushmore had an easier challenge...Because it will only happen when we come to worship with an open and willing mind and heart,...ready to let God do His work...When we recite the prayers and make the responses and sing the hymns fully aware of what we are saying...and not just empty words...When we listen with open ears and hearts as Jesus speaks to us thru the

readings from Sacred Scripture and the words of the preacher,....as Jesus instructs us, comforts us, forgives us, challenges us...

And when we come to Holy Communion mindful of the awesomeness of what is happening as God Himself –Jesus Christ - miraculously feeds us with the same Body and Blood He sacrificed for us ...because He wants to be close to us,... to make His home in us,... to nourish us and strengthen us to deal with all of the problems, worries and questions we bring with us...When we are open to and aware of all these amazing ways God is present in our worship,..God WILL change us and it WILL show in our faces.

God loves to change the faces of His children...It won't be as flashy as what happened to Jesus on the mountain,...but He will change tears of despair into tears of hope... wrinkles of worry will be rubbed smooth...jaws clenched in anger will relax...shadows of shame and shadows of doubt will fade away...bags under tired, weary eyes will disappear...God can do this ...God will do this when we come to worship Him with a willing and open heart...And you know what? Not only will God change the faces of those who worship,...He will change the faces of those who watch us worship.

St. Paul reminded the people of the church in Corinth about this in 1Cor 14...Paul told them to worship God in such a way that if an unbeliever were watching them he would declare, "God is surely among you,"...and the unbeliever would fall down on his face and worship God...Now, I don't expect to see people falling down and praising God just because they see the wonder and joy in our faces as we worship....Yet our spirited, heartfelt worship just might spark something in someone who has come with a heart that's not so ready to be touched by what happens here. ...At almost every Mass there will be people who didn't choose to be here – usually some of the younger ones...You parents know who I mean...And there will be those who are not sure why they are here...not sure what they believe. ...They're searching for something...some meaning, some purpose,... but they don't know what...Then there are the many who come out of faithful obedience, yet mostly they just go through the motions without letting themselves enter more deeply into the wonders that God is working here...

When these folks see others joyfully praising and worshiping God, it can spark something in them.It can make them want to see the one in charge – God....You see, through how we worship,...we can evangelize. We can bring others to a deeper awareness of God's power and presence.

One more thing... I did not preach this message for only your ears ...I have to confess that there are times when my mind and my heart are far from my worship – even when I'm on the altar...So, do as I say not as I do...I've often said that I usually preach the homily I need to hear, ...and I have to hear it four times! ...If it doesn't sink in after that, there's no hope for me... I hope it sinks in for all of us.

My friends, Jesus wants us to come to worship with hearts and minds that are tuned in to the power and the mystery of what happens here...So, as we continue our Lenten journey, let's promise God and promise ourselves that we will come to Mass seeking to meet the One in charge...That's what that little boy did as he got on the plane,...and because he did, he left with a transfigured face and a set of wings...The same can happen to us. AMEN!