

Reflection for Monday April 27, 2020

Can you remember a time when you looked upon the face of another and absolutely knew that you were in the presence of someone deeply rooted in God? It is a transforming experience isn't it? Imagine Stephen before the Sanhedrin, after a grueling interrogation aimed at discrediting him to point of being charged with blasphemy and punishable by death, and then the writer concludes with this sentence: "All who sat in the Sanhedrin looked intently at him and saw that his face was like the face of an angel." (Acts 6:15)

Despite the false accusations brought against him and the stress of the inquisition before the Sanhedrin, Stephen's deep faith and trust in Jesus empowered him and was noticeably reflected in his face, and like Moses after encountering God on Mt. Sinai and Jesus during the Transfiguration, his face reflected the "radiance of God." The strength of that kind of faith is an invitation and a challenge for us in these times.

We are surrounded by a daily feast of misinformation, discord, blaming, efforts to discredit and divide – all clamoring for our allegiance. How do we stand in the face of all of this? How do our lives reveal the "radiance of God" as we move through our days? When others encounter us, what do they experience about God?

This reading from Acts about Stephen is good for us. I am humbled to know that I need this deep reminder; perhaps it also speaks to you.

In John's Gospel, we are asked to ponder what food truly gives life. Here are the people who just experienced Jesus' feeding of the 5,000 and seeking him out for more. However, the *more* that they seek from Jesus will be different than they imagine. Jesus redirected their focus from the *bread* experience a day earlier to a *food* that endures for eternal life.

Eternal life, though, is understood not to mean "immortality or a future life in heaven, but as a metaphor for living now in the unending presence of God." *Living now in the unending presence of God.* Jesus then described that how that is done is to be about the work of God and that work is believing in him. Believing in him upon whom Abba God set Divine Love's seal.

Throughout Biblical stories and human living, we have seen and still see witness after witness of lives rooted in Christ and displaying the radiance of God. We have seen indescribable beauty, courage and compassion all over the world as people strive to care for those impacted by COVID19. Those faces enshrouded in protective covering radiate *living now in the presence of God*.

Very likely you have your own icons who reveal the meaning of “living now in the unending presence of God,” and in so doing became transformative forces in life and for life. The work of God is always about life. Let us be in conversation with Jesus the Christ throughout this day cultivating that deep faith in him so that in our “living now in the unending presence of God” we become the radiant expression of the gift and grace of the Resurrection.

This is our hope and our life forever.

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Resources

Give Us This Day, April 2020

The New Interpreters Study Bible, Abington Press 2003