

December 22, 2019

Dear Friends,

In the rear of the Mary Chapel, on the wall, is an oil painting of the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee. Jesus is there and the servers are busy filling the large jars with water that he will soon transform into choice wine. Next to him in the picture is his mother. If you look closely Jesus looks like Mary. You can tell that he is her son just like you can often tell by looking who a person's mother or father is. Genetically, we often resemble one or the other of our parents.

The first time I saw that painting I was struck by that simple reality. He looked like his mother. God has a face. That's the thought. God wanted to have a face, a human face, that would enable us to see him and look at him and read that face and recognize what was going on inside of him because of what was showing on his face.

People who knew my father will tell me that I look just like him at this point in my life. More so now probably than at any time in my adult life. You know, we get to see everyone else's face but rarely our own. Yes, we look in the mirror during our daily hygiene and at a few other times perhaps during the day. But I rarely really look at my face. I did just a few days back and thought to myself that there is a lot of mileage on this face. People will say "You look good." Or, "You don't look 72." I look and say, I look every day of those 72 years. But here's what struck me. Somewhere along the line as given as my face is in its genetic make-up what my face looks like is something that I have a lot to do with.

How much I eat, what I eat, how much I sleep or don't sleep, how much stress there is in my life, how much love and friendship, how accepting of myself or demanding, how much success, how many failures, dreams fulfilled and dreams abandoned—all these things have an impact on my life of course but on my face especially. There is much we can read in the face of another person. Jesus wants us to be able to see his face. That is, for me, the purpose behind the Shroud of Turin being saved all these years and finally having a photograph of the face on the shroud become a positive image of Our Lord when the photographer developed the film. I look at that picture of Jesus' face every day and pray before him every day. When he comes again, in his glory, I want to see his face in real time and recognize the face of the one who lived for me and died for me.

But here's the thing. I can sometimes see Jesus in your face. And you can sometimes see Jesus in my face. Our faces are revelatory. We reveal things that we don't even realize we are revealing. When Our Lord says that there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed wouldn't it be interesting if he was actually talking about our faces and how they reveal not just what we want to reveal but what is actually going on within us. For that indeed is the case.

This Christmas give thanks to God for the gift of his Son and the face that has saved the world. And for your own face that shows forth to that same world what he means to you. Merry Christmas!

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry