

2nd SUNDAY in LENT (A-5) (9:30am & 6:00pm) **The Wonders of God**

In his book Sermon in Stone, Mel Ellis talks about a geography class who'd taken a "book" tour of the earth. They were tested at the end about the 7 Wonders of the World. They were to vote for them. Their top picks were: The Great Pyramid of Egypt, the Taj Mahal, the Grand Canyon, the Panama Canal, the Empire State building, St. Peter's Basilica, and China's Great Wall.

While tallying the votes, the teacher noted that one little girl had not responded. When questioned as to why, the girl said she couldn't make up her mind because there were so many. The teacher coaxed her into sharing what she had. Reluctantly, the little girl stood up and read from her paper: "I think the 7 Wonders of the World are: to touch, to taste, to see, to hear, and then to run, to laugh and to love."

(adapted from "Welcome to the Mountain. Now go home," Dynamic Preaching, 1993, pg. 1-2)

From the mouth of babes comes the wisdom of God. To name the senses and running, laughing and loving as the 7 Wonders of the World could only be uttered by someone blessed to have experienced the awe of God. St. Ignatius Loyola would canonize her right now because she realizes that we know God through our senses and our joy, that God is in all things and all things are in God. She shares elation with Peter. He saw Jesus, Moses and Elijah shining, & said: "It's good for us to be here."

But note: when Peter wanted to stay, to build booths, Jesus resists being clung to. He ends the blessing in order to make the point that they had to return to the valley. He wanted them and us to find out that the only mountain-top experiences worth having are those that lead us back down to the valley of life, lived in service. An authentic experience with Christ on the mountain leaves us changed persons. (adapted, *ibid*, pg. 4)

If the mountain in the Bible is the symbol of an encounter with the living God, then the altar is the Catholic's mountain-top. We experience God transfigured in you, the assembly, in the Word, in the consecrated bread and wine, in the priest, and in the music. We sign ourselves when beginning a service so that we hold God to God's promise, "Where two or more are gathered in my name I am there in your midst."

In John's Gospel the Word is identified as God. (John 1:1) The bread and wine that are consecrated have traditionally been celebrated as the Body and Blood of Christ, as seen in the Bible. The priest represents the person of Christ-with-us. And music, when well-done, has the power to transport us in time and place to sacred moments of fond memories.

We receive communion in order to become what we receive: Good News, life-giving bread, light and salt. If this experience of the Eucharist is truly worth having, it must lead us down to the valley of service, the valley of Good Works. Hence, the Mass, itself, is a Christ-Transfigured celebration. Our touch, taste, sight, and ears, along with our running, laughing, and loving, are all celebrated at the Mass. They are the instruments God uses to transfigure himself in our midst.

When I close this homily, I will close with a blessing. Remember that Christ' real presence is already in our midst in you, in me, and in the Word being proclaimed. Our eyes, ears, and self have already been blessed. We now bless ourselves so that we can touch and taste God's presence in communion, in order to run, laugh and love as apostles sent to run, laugh and love in the name of Jesus, the Christ.

Let us also pray that the world's eyes, ears, hands, taste, legs, sense of humor and ability to love are heightened by Christ transfigured in you and me. Let us show them the 7 Wonders of Christ's World with joy, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And let the Church say, "AMEN!"