


From the Gospel: Mirror, mirror on the wall...

There are moments in our life where we cannot escape facing the truth

Community

Religion

24 April 2022 | Fr Charlò Camilleri, O.Carm. |  

 3 min read

The second reading points to the coming of the Risen Lord, supreme judge of all. In that moment of truth “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”. Photo: Shutterstock.com

Second Sunday in Eastertide. Today's readings: Acts 5:27-32; Ps 118:14-29/Ps 150; Rev 1:4-8; Jn 20:19-31

We all know Brothers Grimm’s “magic mirror on the wall” in Schneeweißchen (Snow-White), where a pathologically troubled queen religiously stands daily before a mirror, interrogating it “who’s the fairest of them all?”

Mirrors are impartial in reflecting back what stands before them. For this reason they have since time immemorial been the object of myths and rituals. Mirrors graced temple entrances, reminding approaching devotees they should shed any falsehood while stepping in to stand before the gods, who discerned what lies deeply in their hearts.

In Christianity, the mirror metaphor has been used ever since the First epistle to the Corinthians, suggesting that divine enlightenment enables us to perceive our own truth, knowing, “even as I have been fully known” by God. Divine “face to face” reflection is truer, sharper and clearer than that of a dim mirror (1 Cor 13:12).

Philosophically, the mirror as an instrument of reflection, has been used as a metaphor in the debate on truth, knowledge of self and of reality. Standing before God and before one’s conscience to behold the truth of one’s heart, has been the goal of authentic initiation into the mysteries of all religious and spiritual traditions. In Christianity, this was expressed mainly by women mystics in terms of standing before Christ, mirror of the soul.

Marguerite Porete develops this spiritual practice in *Le Mirouer de Simples Ames Anienties*; Agnes of Prague suggests to “look upon that mirror each day”; Magdalene de’ Pazzi speaks in terms of gazing in Christ; Dante also speaks of God as “that mirror, where before you speak, your thoughts have been displayed” as God is “the truthful mirror, perfectly reflecting all else” (*Paradiso* 15:61-63; 24:106-109). At the summit of his journey embarked throughout the Easter Triduum, at the moment Dante when realises he had lost the straight path and was falling low, he becomes able to see his truth in the Divine mirror.

This Sunday’s liturgy, known as *domenica in albis vestibus* (Sunday in white vestments), when the newly baptised, wearing their baptismal garments, signalling new life in Christ, invite us to stand before God and truthfully search our hearts. There are moments in our life where we cannot escape facing the truth of our consciences; decisive moments where the truth on our own self, and on the nature of things, surfaces before us. In these moments we find ourselves pressed to answer the question where we really stand as human beings, as people of faith, as Christians.

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In the first reading, we are told that Jesus’s disciples were brought “to stand before the Council”. Their hearts searched in the tribunal, they were able to proclaim, “we must obey God rather than any human authority”, while firmly standing up for their principles, in truth and justice, calling the authorities for repentance and conversion from their vitiated ways. Similarly the psalmist, repentant on the doorsteps of God’s sanctuary, after being submitted to severe punishment for immorality, asks for the opening of “the gates of righteousness”, acknowledging that only the righteous shall enter before the living God.

The second reading points to the coming of the Risen Lord, supreme judge of all. In that moment of truth “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”. Standing in truth before the one who surfaces alive from our deepest centre, emerging through the “locked doors” of a hardened faithless heart, perhaps enslaved by anxiety of self-preservation, rendered as “fear” in today’s gospel, should trigger in us the urgency of radical change, conversion and healing: the gift of Easter.

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