

Eleventh Talk

SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF GOD

Brothers, just a reminder before I go on to the subject of this talk: I invite you to look at the silence we observe these days as a way to protect God's opportunity to speak. God is not limited to the times we set aside for prayer. Remember that at the most unlikely moments, moments of silence, God may speak. It would be terrible if we missed hearing his voice. I would also remind you of Edmund Rice's words, "*Be intent on prayer.*" Be purposeful about prayer. Ask for grace. To be patient is the hardest thing for us Brothers, who have been doers for so much of our lives. Jack Moysten asks his retreatants to be docile - to be patient and docile in the belief that God is there and that he will speak to us and do things within us in his time. Readiness is all. Take the risk of describing what happened in your prayer, even if you feel that not much has happened. You do not know how God may use your words - how they may be picked up by one of your listeners and what encouragement they may give him.

In my last talk about those people who are blessed, who have eyes that see and ears that hear, one of the images I have, which reminds me about this, is that of the huge Hubbell Telescope in the sky that sends back pictures every now and then. When it was launched it ran into trouble almost immediately. Something was wrong with the alignment of the mirrors, so a manned expedition had to be sent up to right it. When the pictures started being beamed back to earth, the amazing thing was that it changed the way people saw the universe. Overnight people were rewriting theories and theses about the creation of our world. The pictures showed a world that was marvellous, so totally different from what people had expected. To me the wonder is that the world existed long before Hubbell; he provided us with a way of seeing it.

God's world is - and always was there. Are we using the right lens through which to look at it? I invite you in the light of what I said in my last talk to go back to Luke IV: 16 ff. And see what Jesus says when he speaks about (1) good news being brought to the poor, (2) liberty to captives, (3) new sight to the blind, (4) freedom for prisoners and (5) a year of God's favour. Notice that (1) and (5) correspond, as do (2) and (4). The (3) is in the middle, all alone. This is the technique used by old Hebrew writers to highlight a message. The one which has no other parallel is new sight to the blind. It is the only one not found in the text of Isaias.

So this is the new thing that Jesus brings - new sight to the blind. The central part of the Gospel is that life can be lived differently. That is possible only if we see it differently. We see then how important it is for us religious, who wish to be prophetic, to be contemplative, to perceive differently. You may remember that in an earlier talk I mentioned that Joan Chichester speaks about contemplation as *looking at our world through God's eyes*. She calls contemplation "*the ability to see through, to see into, to see despite, to see without blindness. It is the ability to see a whole world rather than a partial one*". It is all connected and it is all about God. In Rome Br. Peter Fogarty brings quite a number of women who have been unable to have children to a certain shrine of Our Lady and after praying there, they have conceived. Today God is causing life to spring up in the most unlikely places. But God is always causing life to spring up, as he did in the womb of Abraham's wife, Sarah. When she was ninety years old, she conceived and brought forth Isaac. But with God there is always a price to pay. Abraham experienced that when God demanded of him the sacrifice of his only son. His faith was tested to the ultimate and it survived the test. We too have to pay the price for the new life that is been born in each one of us and in our Congregation. That new life is not an end in itself. It is always for something else, for another expression of God's love. It is the prodigality of God. Love begets love.

As you go off to pray, look at your own life. Take the last three years and ask yourself what God has brought to birth in you. You may not notice it but what God has brought to birth in you and me and in every one of us is there, because I believe that every one of us has a relationship with God. Otherwise we would not be here. In the last three years God has brought something to life in each one of us, something wonderful that needs to be cherished and shared. Pray to this light-giving God. Speak about the areas in your life that are broken and dark and ask that God to throw light on them, to bring life out of dead flesh.