

St. Sebastian, Milwaukee
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, October 11, 2020

Reflections -

1. MUSIC

“My Eyes For Beauty Pine” – Herbert Howells

Performed by Central Coast Chorale

Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TET4e3C6TPo&feature=emb_title

[text – recording is not very intelligible]

My eyes for beauty pine,
My soul for Goddes grace:
No other care nor hope is mine,
To heaven I turn my face.

One splendour thence is shed
From all the stars above:
'Tis named when God's name is said,
'Tis Love, 'tis heavenly Love.

And every gentle heart,
That burns with true desire,
Is lit from eyes that mirror part
Of that celestial fire.

Music Notes:

Today’s gospel is yet another parable about “the Kingdom”. Today’s musical selection is a unique and beautiful rendition of this hymn text, poetically speaking about our longing to be in God’s Holy presence.

2. SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

“Choosing Heaven”

Richard Rohr shares a reflection from Franciscan sister and scientist Ilia Delio (who in turn presents insights from Rabbi Rami Shapiro), reflecting on eternity, love, and heaven.

Heaven is earth transformed by love when earthly life is lived in love; the suffering of earth is transformed into a foretaste of heaven when one sees and hears from the inner center of love. Even in heaven the wounds of suffering will not be removed but will be transformed by divine love into new and eternal life. Heaven is not a place of eternal rest or a long sleep-in, but a life of creativity and newness in love; one with God in the transformation of all things. . . .

One might think, on face value, that the self-creation of heaven and hell conflicts with the scriptures, but in fact, the gospel message is based on invitation and choice, symbolized by the parable of the wedding feast: “Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner . . . and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’ But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business” (Matthew 22:1-14). The question of heaven is not one of worthiness before God but accepting God’s invitation for life: “I have set before you life and death, choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19). . . .

Christian life requires a conscious decision to shift the mind (*metanoia*) by training the mind to focus on the central values of the gospel and to dispense with all other things. Without the choice for a new level of consciousness, there can be no new reality or reign of God. Where our minds focus, there our treasure lies. As Rabbi Shapiro writes, “I made the choice for heaven and, having done so, I went in search of tools for living it.” [1] When Teilhard [de Chardin] said that we are evolution made conscious of itself, he indicated a basic lesson of modern science: there is no real “world” apart from us; rather, the world unfolds in and through our choices and actions. The concept of world is like a mirror; empty in itself, it can only reflect to the giver the values it receives. Rabbi Shapiro [asks]:

Will you engage this moment with kindness or with cruelty, with love or with fear, with generosity or scarcity, with a joyous heart or an embittered one? This is your choice and no one can make it for you. If you choose kindness, love, generosity, and joy, then you will discover in that choice the Kingdom of God, heaven, nirvana, this-worldly salvation. If you choose cruelty, fear, scarcity, and bitterness, then you will discover in that choice the hellish states of which so many religions speak. These are not ontological realities tucked away somewhere in space—these are existential realities playing out in your own mind. Heaven and hell are both inside of you. It is your choice that determines just where you will reside. [2]

References:

[1] Rabbi Rami Shapiro, *The Sacred Art of Lovingkindness: Preparing to Practice* (SkyLight Paths Publishing: 2006), xii.

[2] *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

Ilia Delio, *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness* (Orbis Books: 2015), 96-97, 158-159.