



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The second Sunday in Lent brings us the Gospel of the Transfiguration. I heard something recently that has stuck with me... I keep thinking about it, meditating on it, trying to find what it means for me as a Catholic. It is this: the Transfiguration manifested the incredible *beauty* of the Lord. There is also the saying: the world will be saved by beauty.

Beauty. It draws us. It lures us. I think about all the times that I have been drawn in by beauty: looking at the mountains; a sunset that feels like it was made just for me; staring out at the ocean.

I'm not sure if you've seen the "Double Rainbow Guy" on YouTube. It is a video worth watching. Here is a man who is so overwhelmed by the beauty of a double rainbow (go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQSNhk5ICTI or look up "Yosemite Mountain Double Rainbow 1-8-10"). In the midst of his ecstasy, he asks, "What does it mean?!"

Do we ask about the *meaning* of beauty? God made beauty in such a way that it draws us because it is part of who He is, and He wants to draw us to Himself. He *is* Beauty Itself. One of the images of Heaven is the "Beatific Vision" – the vision of God. This may not seem like much ("Oh boy. We get to look at God for all eternity"), but think about how we can lose ourselves in beauty! If we saw beauty itself, we would be overwhelmed by Him – even more than the Double-Rainbow Guy. Peter, James and John caught a glimpse of the real beauty of Jesus – as His Divinity shown through His humanity on the mount of Transfiguration – and they were overwhelmed!

One of my favorite Catholic musicians is Dr. Bob Rice. He wrote a song called "In the Laughter of Children". In it, he speaks about how all beauty is a reflection of God's beauty (www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8V-hagITWU). Can you imagine it?! If the beauty of this world can draw us in so powerfully, how much more the beauty of the One who is Beauty Itself?!

I think this is part of the draw of the scourge of pornography today. Pornography points to the most beautiful thing in creation – the human person. It is easy to be drawn into this beauty since the human person reflects the beauty of God in a powerful way – we were made in the image and likeness of God, after all. The problem with pornography, though, is that we use others for our pleasure, instead of allowing the beauty of the other to draw us into the beauty of God. As St. John Paul II said, the problem with pornography is not that it shows too much, but that it shows too little. Pornography does not show us the *personhood* of the person. If you struggle with pornography, I encourage you to get the help you need to break this addiction. There are many ways of getting help, but one of the easiest and effective ways is to have accountability. Find someone who will lovingly keep you accountable. A good accountability software is "Covenant Eyes." For a low monthly fee (and if you can't afford it, they will give it to you for free), they will help to keep you sober, by being accountable to those who love you. (See www.covenanteyes.com for more information and to sign up.)

Jesus' Transfiguration reveals the beauty of God. I think this reading is set up close to the beginning of Lent so that we don't lose heart as we go through the Lenten Season. Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah was about His crucifixion (see Luke 9:31). He experienced the great closeness of God before heading to the Cross. He also allowed Peter, James and John to experience His Divine Beauty so that they would not despair with the Cross.

In our lives, too, God will often call us up the mountain to Divine Intimacy to strengthen us for the Cross. In the dark moments of our lives, we can look back to those "mountain moments" to be strengthened by the beauty of God's love. Through this Lent, I invite you to look for moments of beauty ... they're all around us. Beauty is a sign of God; contemplate (literally, "gaze") on beauty, and, like the double-rainbow guy, ponder, "What does this mean?"