

Archbishop Smith: Eyes Fixed

I'm hearing many stories these days of people whose eyes seem always to be fixed on the news. On TV or radio, through Internet sites or over social media, reports of developments regarding the COVID-19 coronavirus are attracting – and fixing – our attention. Difficult to pull away. Our eyes are “fixed” on every development.

More and more we hear doctors tell us we should disconnect from time to time, pull away, fix our eyes elsewhere. Good advice. We can only sustain so many traumatic reports, and it is good to focus elsewhere.

My question is about the “elsewhere.” When we avert our eyes from the news, where are we fixing our gaze? Some will speak of TV shows or a good novel, for example. I'm doing the same, I must admit. A good spy novel is a wonderful and distracting refuge.

I want to suggest another object of our focus, somewhere else to which we need to turn our gaze and “fix our eyes,” especially now. Let's deliberately “fix our eyes” on Jesus. This admonition is far from original. It arises out of Sacred Scripture itself.

Consider when Jesus first preached in his hometown synagogue at Nazareth. As he preached, we are told, the eyes of everyone present were “fixed on him” (Luke 4:20) Something about his person, and the authority with which he spoke, clearly gripped them and they could not take their eyes off of him. The salvific importance of keeping one's eyes fixed on the Lord was later demonstrated dramatically when Jesus walked across the water towards his disciples in peril on the storm-tossed lake (cf. Matthew 14: 22-33). As long as Peter, who had heeded the Lord's call to step out of the boat, kept his eyes on Jesus, he could walk across the choppy waters safely; as soon as looked instead upon the peril he began to sink. From these episodes we can appreciate why we are told in the Letter to the Hebrews to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord. Jesus is “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2) Gazing upon Jesus, and especially upon him crucified, we see the One who is the gift of the Father to the world. If the Father would give His only Son, then there is no other good gift he will refuse us (cf. Romans 8:31-39). We also see him, who trusted completely in this love of the Father, and summoned all of us to do the same (cf. Matthew 6:25-34)

Fixing our eyes on the news can easily give rise to foreboding and fear. Fixing our eyes on Jesus renews and strengthens our faith. And faith is what we really need to exercise right now.

Now, of course, I am not counselling anyone not to watch the news. We must be informed. What I would like to offer is a little suggestion. Consider placing a crucifix near the TV, radio, or computer – near, that is, wherever we are

getting our news. This will enable us, as we listen to the news source, to keep on eyes fixed on Jesus. Our crucified Lord is the supreme sign of the love of God, and of his determination to enter into the fear, anxiety and suffering of his people in order to rescue us.

Eyes fixed on the Lord. He will accompany and lead us through any and every difficulty.