

Archbishop Smith: That Look



It used to instill terror in us as kids. We knew instantly we were in trouble whenever we were confronted by “that look,” namely, the maternal glare.

Our blood would run cold, our knees knock, and abundant prayers for protection went up to heaven.

Another kind of “look” meets us in the Gospel passage from Sunday (John 1: 35-42): the “look” of Jesus. We are told that Simon, upon having been brought by his brother Andrew to the Lord, meets the holy gaze. Jesus “looked at him.”

From that glance, life was never the same for Simon. “You are Simon son of John,” Jesus says. “You are to be called Cephas (which is translated Peter).

What is happening here?

Jesus is seeing to the very core of Peter’s identity and drawing it forth. Whatever others may have thought of Simon, regardless of how Simon may have seen himself, Jesus sees to the truth of his identity in God and names it: you are Peter.

Whenever we place ourselves before the look of Jesus, the same thing happens; our full truth is laid open to view, and we find meaning, direction and destiny.

Somewhat reminiscent of the maternal glare, the look of Jesus might frighten us. After all, there is a lot in us that we would rather others not see, that perhaps we would prefer not even to acknowledge ourselves.

Indeed, this also happened with Peter. After he had denied the Lord three

times, the Gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus turned and “looked at him.” (Luke 22:61) Under that penetrating regard, Peter realized the horror of what he had done.

In other instances, the look of Christ will bring us to an awareness of something lacking in our discipleship and thus summon us to new depths of conversion. Not easy.

Consider what happened when a rich young man came to Jesus and asked what more he should do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10: 17-22). Jesus, we are told, looked at him and told him that he must sell his possessions, give his money to the poor and follow him.

Important to note in the last example is that Jesus, in looking at the young inquirer, loved him.

Indeed, the love of the Lord always stands always behind “that look” of his. For this reason, we can place ourselves confidently before his gaze. No need to be afraid.

So, let’s raise our eyes to meet his and ask him to look at us.

In that encounter, we meet Truth and discover the truth of ourselves. That is what leads to the fullness of life and joy.

