

The Desire for God  
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Jer 31:31-34; Heb 5:7-9; Jn 12:20-33

*'Sir, we would like to see Jesus.'* This inquiry by the Greeks vocalizes something that is at the very core of our entire life and existence. It's a longing for an Other; infinitely surpassing our search for possessions, honors, recognition, acceptance, pleasure nor does it find definitive rest in a spouse, children, or community. It incessantly calls us forth, no matter where we are in life; no matter what we've achieved—or can't even seem to begin; regardless of our age, education, or friends, it remains within us, demanding a response. It won't stop because *He* will never stop. A document from Vatican II, proclaims this truth: *'The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.'*

There are three points of meditation that ought to be drawn out for their importance in attaining to this deeper communion with God. They are desire, obedience and suffering.

**Desire** is what is written in the human heart by God Himself. We are all too familiar with its erroneous attempts at fulfillment. Sin is what plagues us day in and day out. Left to ourselves we run up against the same perilous pathways that trip us up and slow us down on the road towards Our Lord. Although the desire for God never leaves us—because *He* will never leave us—we can deceive ourselves into believing—or allow the evil one to do it for us—that it's *not* true, that there *is* something else, or someone else, that will quench this insatiable desire; that it's *not* God Himself.

For we might say, ‘why is He treating me like this, why does He burden us to a breaking point? This doesn’t feel like love to me.’ These are all too human responses to our plight, which is why they surface so often. But it reveals and unmask the stumbling block we all put in the way. It’s not new either. In fact, it’s as old as Adam and Eve: it’s a lack of faith. It’s a wasted grace. No different than the people of Israel are we when it comes to believing in God, in taking Him at His Word. He has planted His Word in our hearts as a covenant, promising a fulfillment of our innate desire for Him, and we find ways to close the door upon Him.

Even though this is a troubling situation in which we find ourselves, it has a remedy. The antidote for these incessant bites, or gouges, whatever the case may be for each one’s journey and struggle, is **obedience**. To obey another is ultimately the fruit of a lively faith, a free decision to follow the will of another. And it is supremely proper to respond in obedience to the Word of God which is Truth and Love Itself. One *cannot* be deluded or disappointed by surrendering to the Will of God Himself. We can start to perceive how instinctually right those Greeks were in the gospel who wanted to see Jesus. The Law of God, which was written on their hearts and had no other purpose than to align themselves with God, urged them to ask to see Jesus. For they must have heard of Him, and His Word not only mirrored what was in their hearts already, but had sparked within them a deeper desire to be in His Presence. They were obeying the truth of their hearts and had faith in the Words of Jesus.

It is a universal desire that each human person has, to live in deep communion with God, with their Creator and Redeemer. And the solution God has given us is obedience, most excellently exemplified for our imitation in God Himself, in Jesus Christ. We hear from the Letter to the Hebrews: *‘In the days when Christ Jesus was in the flesh...’* Christ’s own desire for the Will of the Father is foremost in His Life. His plight is ours; His response must be ours. The prayers of

anguish and tears that met Him along the way of His ministry and passion are to be a consolation and a joy for us. As the psalmist says, *'Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me.'* For such a stance that Christ took was one founded upon obedient love and so became a sure path to perfection.

Yet the greatest hurdle for us is **suffering**. It's presence is uncomfortable, sad, senseless and often downright painful. Therefore we try to avoid it; we close its door and run; or we allow it to rankle us and so deprive it of any value. One of the most common ways we find to face it is by allowing that deep desire for God to surface and to be 'satisfied' by some fleeting pleasure, which only exacerbates the suffering and prevents our growth. But Jesus reveals to us that *'unless a grain of wheat dies, it remains only a grain of wheat.'* All of this goes to show that Christ now is *in* the suffering that we confront; that following our fundamental desire for God, necessitates this new and strangely difficult path of obedient suffering, when we put to rest those obstacles which bar us from union and fuller life with Christ out of love. Christ suffers with us and in us, *creating a clean heart* for us every step of the way, so long as we freely choose to *lose our life* so as to find it new in Him. He demands that we follow Him and be of service to *His way, His plan* and *His Cross* which lead to eternal life.

Brothers and sisters, your reaction and mine once again mirror our Lord's: *'I am troubled now.'* We see the path, we know what it takes, we know that we must die a thousand little deaths in order to see God; but we're hesitant, even resistant to its demands. The detachments we will need to make; the goodbyes we *must* invoke upon those vicious habits, (or even good ones), that have been stifling our spiritual growth, are all painful prospects and make us wince at the cost to ourselves. However, although our flesh is weak, our spirit must be willing to say not *'Father, save me from* these sufferings and trials, but rather *'Father, glorify your name.'* In imitation of Our

Lord, we must honestly recognize and keep before our mind and heart, our desire for God, and so work out our salvation in obedience to God's plan which asks of us everything, even suffering.

I would suggest that you read and meditate deeply upon paragraphs 27-30 of the *Catechism* in the coming week. Allow those reflections and absolutely vital truths to take root in your life and guide you as we step closer to the heart of the Paschal Mystery. For Jesus Himself proclaims that *'When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.'* There is no **desire, obedience,** or **suffering** greater than the sacrifice of the Cross. Indeed He continues to draw each one of us to Himself at every Eucharistic sacrifice, to gaze on Him, imploring us to worship Him in truth, in unwavering faith and in total love. Let us wait no longer to follow Him unreservedly, but rather heed His voice and entrust ourselves to Him as a sacrifice of praise to the glory of the Father. Amen.