

2nd Sunday of Advent
December 6, 2009
Fr. Tom Elliott

The Journey: An Eternal Perspective

Baruch 5:1-9
Psalm 126
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
Luke 3:1-6

I took my niece and nephews to see the new movie, “A Christmas Carol” in 3D a couple of weeks ago. I had not been to a 3D movie in years. In fact, the last time I was at one, the 3D glasses had red and blue lenses in them and were made of flimsy cardboard. I was very impressed to find out that the new 3D glasses are like *real* glasses and have clear lenses in them. Of course, the lenses are not simply glass; there is something special about them that causes the movie to come to life in some very amazing ways. During the movie, I removed the glasses just to see what the movie would look like without them and found things *very* blurry. The special glasses offered a very special perspective.

Last weekend, I preached on recognizing the “journey” we are on and asked everyone to think of a specific journey. I explained how it may or may not have been a journey that God invited us to make, but that, regardless, God desires to be present with us on the journey. It might be something new and exciting that is happening in our lives, or something difficult and challenging. Regardless of what our journey looks like, God wants to be intimately involved in it, changing our hearts and giving meaning to how He’s moving us. This weekend, I want to look at one important component of every journey that we are on with God—the eternal perspective.

Just as 3D glasses can transform a blurry movie screen into an amazing experience, the various journeys of the heart that we make in life are significantly transformed when we look at them through the lens of eternity. For example, I shared with all of you last week how God has been stretching me by asking me to move beyond the boundaries of our parish and beyond the boundaries of my comfort zone. Beginning to celebrate the Mass in Spanish was one of those boundaries. Before I could begin to struggle with the “nuts and bolts” of offering another Mass on the weekend, I had to first understand the *need* for another Spanish Mass in the River Valley. The way God helped me understand that need was by offering me the “eternal view” of the situation.

I’ve heard many people make the comment that the Hispanics should simply learn English and that the Church should not cater to them by offering them Mass in Spanish. I’ve come to see just how different that perspective is compared to the eternal view. The eternal view reminds me that we believe as Christians that Jesus’ return is imminent and that we must be prepared at this very moment. If we are going to take that belief seriously, then we must care for the spiritual needs of those who *literally* don’t have time to learn English! For me to suggest that the Hispanics should learn English before they can participate in Mass and get help in growing spiritually would be a failure on my part to live out what we profess every week at Mass when we pray, “Thy Kingdom come...”

Regardless of what type of journey we are currently on right now in our lives, there is an eternal perspective to it—a perspective that helps us to see the journey in a broader context and helps to move us beyond our fears, apprehensions, and wounds. In our first reading today, God offers to the Israelites an eternal perspective of their difficult struggle—

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God *forever*: Wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, bear on your head the mitre that displays the glory of the *eternal* name. For God will show all the earth your splendor: you will be named by God *forever* the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship.

-Baruch 5:1-4 (*emphasis mine*)

Surely these words did not immediately change the situation the Jewish people were in, but they must have changed what their hearts were feeling in the midst of the situation. It moved the eyes of their hearts from their earthly situation to God's eternal plan. This is what God desires to do for each of us, no matter what journey we currently find ourselves making.

In our second reading today from Paul's letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul used some different words to describe the same "eternal perspective." He wrote to the people of Philippi, telling them that he was praying that "[their] love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value" (Phil. 1:9-10a). What a great prayer for each of us as we make our journeys through this life, that our love may increase and that we'll grow in knowledge and "every kind of *perception*," and discern the things of eternity and of heaven!

In the movie, "A Christmas Carol," Ebenezer Scrooge needed the help of a ghost and three spirits in order to gain a new perspective on his life. As Christians, we have a much greater help in the Holy Spirit. This week, I invite us to ask the Holy Spirit to help us to see the particular journey that we are currently on in a new way, with an eternal perspective; a perspective that moves the eyes of our hearts from the things of this world to the Kingdom that is coming.

SUGGESTED PRAYER EXERCISES:

- ✚ How does 2 Peter 3:8-14 change your perspective of the journey you are currently on in your life?
- ✚ Reflecting on the particular journey that you are currently making, what makes you the most fearful, the most hopeful, the most contrite, and the most joyful?