

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jan 16th 2018

It is so easy to do. We have all done it.

We pull up to the stop light, and there to our left is a person dressed in dirty clothes holding a handmade cardboard sign that says, "Will work for food," or "Homeless. Anything helps."

Based on the visual clues we see with our eyes, our brains begin to process the image. Often the feedback we receive from our brains is based on our biases, and our first thought may be something like, "The shelters in town provide for the homeless. This person just wants money for drugs," or, "The newspaper says there are lots of jobs available. Why doesn't this person get a real job instead of begging?"

Let's face it. We live in a superficial, visual world where we are inundated with image after image of who we should aspire to look like and the material goods we should acquire so that we, too, can have a look of affluence and success. The image our eyes see of the homeless person just doesn't fit.

But think about it. Is there more to our world than what our eyes see? Of course there is, but it takes work and practice to see it.

If we were asked to say what is most important in our lives, most of us would probably list things that no one can see – the love of a spouse, the joy of being with a close friend, knowing that your co-workers are trustworthy, the compassion of a neighbor or most importantly, God's daily presence in our lives.

All of these are invisible to the naked eye, they can only be felt in the heart. These invisible things probably bring us our greatest contentment and joy.

Now remember the words of the Lord to Samuel about a man dressed not in rags but in fine silks, when the Lord said, "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because he sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart."

So how do we learn to not only see with our eyes but also with our hearts? How do we let the invisible shine through and take center stage?

Today, as we spend our allotted time in our Examen of Consciousness, we can focus on how to become better at letting our eyes see the invisible - before we see the visible. We can be skeptical and not let our biases skew our impressions of someone we do not know, or our need to acquire a new and shiny possession.

Instead, we can focus on the value of the invisible: love, friendship, trust, compassion and God's everlasting presence in our lives. We can make more room in our hearts for them instead of space in our closet for a new purchase. We can learn to first look inside the book before we judge the cover.

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