

7th Sunday of the Year: February 20 homily

How would like to peek into heaven?

What would it look like?

What would people be doing?

What if there would be a hole in this wall that you could peek through to get just a glimpse of how it would be in heaven?

People would be lined up to Eight Mile Road to have a look!

Well, we can look; we can have a peek.

And this is how people would relate to one another

Everyone seems to be getting along with each other.

If anyone has a grievance against you, they would immediately settle the grievance; no backbiting, no talking behind backs, no gossip. People would deal with their disagreements in an adult and fair way.

Men would not be giving the evil lustful eye at women and women would not be secretly lusting after men

If someone would accidentally (or God forbid purposely) strike you on your right cheek, you would turn and offer him your left. If someone needed your coat, you would give them your cloak as well.

Everyone would give to the one who asks from them and no one would not turn your back on the borrower

Everyone would Love their enemies and pray for your persecutors

That's how people would live in God's place.

They seem to be living out Jesus' words: Be perfect as my Father is perfect.

Man, that would be a great place to live but how do we even begin to get ready for living such a good and saintly life? It reminds me of the words of scripture: *As high as the heavens are above the earth, are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.*

In the first reading from Isaiah today we also hear God say: Be holy as I am holy. That is quite a tall order!

(Pause)

Idea of Alpha speaker, Nicki Gumbel spoke about people who are holy at our ALPHA session last Wednesday evening. He said that when he thinks about people who are holy, he has developed a sliding scale of holy people. Imagine a sliding scale that goes from the floor to the ceiling of church.

Adolph Hitler: on the floor (scoundrel)

Mr. Theresa at the ceiling

You and I: Are 2/3 of the way up to the ceiling (or maybe a little lower (!?.) depending on what kind of day we are having.

But God, yes God: above the stars!

In today's first reading we hear. "Be holy as I am holy": (explain what this means Be "other" as I am "other")

Sunday afternoon Basketball men experience a bit this "otherness", of heaven, ever since they have begun to play. NOTHING of their possessions have been stolen in the gym

since they started playing last year.

And even though they play intensely, there has been no major fight on the basketball court either. And that's truly a miracle, a bit of heaven!

But how do we get from where we are now to the point of being filled with the holiness of God, a holiness we saw when we peaked into heaven?

Introduce St. Augustine: (give his background. [He lived a wild life having a child out of wedlock until he converted to Christianity at the age of 40] and where he fits on the holiness scale)

From his own spiritual journey, Augustine give us this wisdom:

Suppose you are going to fill some holder or container, and you know you will be given a large amount. Then you set about stretching your sack or wineskin or whatever it is. Why?

Because you know the quantity you will have to put in it and your eyes tell you there is not enough room. By stretching it, you increase the capacity of the sack,and this is how God deals with us. Simply by making us wait he increases our desire, which in turn enlarges the capacity of our soul. Making us wait he increases our desire, which in turn enlarges the capacity of our souls, making it able to receive what is to be given to us.

(Example of the men on Sunday who have nothing missing)

So, my brethren, let us continue to desire, for we shall be filled. Take note of St. Paul stretching as it were his ability to receive what is to come: *not that I have already obtained this*, he said, *or am made perfect. Brethren, I do not consider that I have already obtained it.* We might ask him, "If you have not obtained it, what are you doing in this life to get ready to obtain it? Paul

would answer, *The one thing I do is, forgetting what lies behind (his wild life) , and stretching forward o what lies ahead, I press on toward the prize to which I am called in the life on high with Christ Jesus.* Not only did Paul say he stretched forward, but he also declared that he pressed on toward a chosen goal. He realized in fact that he was still short of receiving *what no eye has seen, or ear heard, nor the human heart conceived.*

Such is our Christian life. By desiring full life with God we exercise the powers of our soul. Now this exercise will be effective only to the extent that we free our selves from desires leading to infatuation with this world. (money: give freely; if a man asks you for our coat, give them your cloak as well. Power: if someone hits you on one cheek, offer him the other, pleasure, do not look lustfully at others)

Let me return to the example I have already used, of filling an empty container. God means to fill each one of us with what is good: so cast out what is bad! If he wishes to fill you with honey and you are filled with sour wine, where is the honey to go? The vessel must be emptied of its contents and then be cleansed, Yes, it must be cleansed even if you have to work hard and scour it. It must be made fit for the new thing , whatever it may be.

We must extend ourselves toward the measure of Christ so that when he comes, he may fill us with his presence. *Then we will be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

Oh yes! If only we could peek into heaven, if we only had a chance to just get a glance! But we can! if we just have the courage to make room in our souls and in our lives for the glory of God.

Come to me all you who labor and I will give you rest!

Come to me, and experience of bit of heaven!

Come and live as if you were in my presence; it may change your life for the better.