

Transfiguration, Cycle A, August 6, 2017

Even though Michelangelo produced great paintings, such as the frescoes that adorn the ceiling and walls of the Sistine chapel, and even though he designed wonderful buildings, such as St. Peter's basilica, Michelangelo thought of himself, not as a painter or as an architect, but rather, as a sculptor. That was his calling. He would look at a block of marble, and see in it the form of a statue. His job was to chip away at that block of marble, cut away the stone, to release the figure within. His vision would guide him in doing that.

It is important to have a vision, a goal. Otherwise, nothing will happen. Without blueprints or some kind of plan, no one can build a house. Without a destination, a journey turns into aimless wandering. Without a vision of what we are meant to be, we cannot live life to the full, we merely survive.

The world presents us with a distorted image for us to focus on, a vision populated with fashion models and sports heroes, attractive, youthful and strong. Those are the images that flash before our eyes on the TV set and movie screen. And since most of us cannot measure up to that standard, the world tries to sell us products that, the commercials assure us, will help us to find a place in that dream. Buy this car, and you will drive to a world of luxury. Wear this deodorant, and the opposite sex will be attracted to you, like mosquitoes to human blood.

We know that this vision is not true. But it looks so appealing, so that we end up yearning for it and striving for it, in spite of ourselves and in spite of our better judgment.

In contrast, Jesus Christ offers us a completely different way of seeing things. He shows us that we may not be able to stay young forever, but that we may be able to have eternal life. He teaches us to value the beauty of the spirit, and not only that of the body.

That is the vision that Peter, James and John see on the mountain in today's gospel reading. They see Jesus revealed as he really is, embodying his teachings, transfigured in glory.

We are created in the image and likeness of God. Unfortunately, sin has tarnished and blurred that image. But, in Jesus Christ, God has restored that image to its perfection. God has revealed to us what we are meant to be. God wants us to share in Christ's glory. God has a plan for us. We catch a glimpse of God's vision for us, in the Transfiguration of Christ.

We acknowledge God as the maker of heaven and earth. God has created a beautiful and wonderful world. God is the supreme artist, the one who inspired artists like Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt. And out of all creation, we human beings stand out as God's masterpiece. But God is not finished with us yet. God is still in the process of molding us and shaping us, chipping away the rough spots, for us to be more like Jesus Christ. That is the vision that God has for us.