

“Forming Jesus” in the Scripture

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The General Assembly of 2017 invited us in a spiritual revival for the Congregation and for each one of us. She proposes us the formation of Jesus in us i.e., the formation of Christ within us.

We have the life and John Eudes’ texts which help us understand better and live what means “forming Christ within us” in the New Testament. He refers to us texts of the Word of God more particularly to Galatians 4:19. I think especially of 2 Corinthians 3:18: “And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.”

One of the things that it is necessary for us to make, says John Eudes “to form Jesus within ourselves,” i.e., we must acquire the habit of seeing him in all things, and having no other objective than him and all his states and mysteries, virtues and actions, in all our devotions and actions (OC I, 273; Lectionary, p. 74)

For me “to look at him in all things” means: CONTEMPLATE JESUS IN HIS LIFE, HIS STATES AND MYSTERIES, HIS VIRTUES AND HIS ACTIONS.

And I think here of the text of II Corinthians 3:18:

And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

These are incredible words of hope and audacity. Paul wants to suggest that the Glory of Christ is seen as in a mirror. Thus the vision is not so direct (I Cor 13:12). The Christian “sees” the glorious Christ “indirectly,” ‘as in a mirror.’

What is this mirror? We could think here this visibility ‘like in a mirror.’

- in the proclamation of the Gospel
- on the specifically Christian path that the Gospel inspires.
- when we are preached to Christ
- when we read about Him in Scripture
- when we find him in the Eucharist

When we find him in our brothers and sisters in his love for us and for all men and women. This “contemplation” is certainly “interior.” We contemplate its unspeakable glory. And when we contemplate “this glory” We are transformed. The important thing in this text is the idea of SEEING. In the New Covenant, the veil is suppressed so that men can SEE, CONTEMPLATE the glory of the Lord.

It means that as Christians, we have access to the invisible God since Christ is the Perfect Image of God. This knowledge of Christ is a “living” knowledge. Christ was made “vivifying spirit” (2 Cor 3:6) for his Resurrection, i.e. capable of giving life to men. And the glory of the Resurrection of Christ is communicated to the Christians by the Power of the Spirit that little by little leads them to their own glorious resurrection (1 Cor 15; Phil 3: 1 ff).

Paul talks about a transformation in this same image. And we are being transformed. This glory produces a metamorphosis in the Christian. It is not about “mysticism.” We do not contemplate God as he is but we contemplate his image perceived in the face of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor 4: 4-6). It is through Christ and his historical person and not through mystical speculation that the invisible God becomes visible. “In this same image.” This expression tells us that Paul means a “true transformation, much more than a conformity” (Rom 8:29). Think of a deep unity with Christ (without the loss of a separate identity). According to 2 Cor 4:4, “Christ is the image of God” (or what I like even more: Col 1:15: “He is the image of the invisible God.”

To be “image of God” is to manifest the glory of God. With this expression “in this same image.” Paul alludes to the image given implicitly in the expression “contemplate as in a mirror.” Along with the mirror, the idea of a mirror-image is present. Therefore, all of us, contemplating the glory of Christ, we are being transformed in the image, in Christ. This “image” is the same as the one we are contemplating as in a mirror; this image is glorious Christ.

This glory is presented to them in the form of an image; that of the Lord, whose splendorous presence we contemplate. Christ is an image of the glory of God since he has this glory in his face (2 Cor 4:6). It is your perfect image! To contemplate the glory of Jesus is to “contemplate the glory of God,” but through the medium of an image and this Image is the glorified Christ. From the glory to glory can evoke: filled with radiance. Indicates a process: from one degree of glory to another progress in sanctification (Eph 4: 16-17) that will lead to the glory that will be revealed (Rom 8:18-25).

It means that the purpose of the transformation is an increasing capacity to give glory to God. For Paul and John Eudes, it is essentially an existence penetrated by love (1 Cor 13). The believers are different “visibly” from the non-believers even if they do not have the brightness of Christ (2 Cor 4:6). This visible difference is the basis of Paul's theology on the Witness of which he speaks in 2 Cor 4, 10-11. When we see this glory, when we see Christ, we are transfigured and Christ is formed within us.