

MIRRORS

“Now I see as in a mirror.” While he traveled the earthly journey, the Apostle Paul viewed reality in that perspective.

I have in my bathroom a double-sided mirror. It is so practical that I usually take another one with me when I travel. There is a regular type of mirror on one side. But, on the other, there is a mirror that magnifies the image. This latter is wonderful for shaving. One can readily see which areas of the face need attention. I am so sold on this “device” that I am disappointed when I do not find one in a hotel while traveling. Perhaps, you use one and understand of what I speak.

As I become more and more intrigued by this two-sided mirror, it becomes a different type of reflection for me. I reflect on Saint Paul's statement and on us in the Church today. Granted, we see all reality as in a mirror. However, which side do we use most often?

There is (what we could call) the normal side to the mirror. That one gives us the image as we normally perceive it. We appear to look as we would in any photo. Proportions appear to be appropriate. It is not difficult to recognize ourselves.

The other side, the one that magnifies, is different. It gives one a closer look. The areas it reflects come out looking bigger than life. While one finds it easier to see the whiskers which need trimming, one becomes very much aware of all the wrinkles and blemishes as well. That side of the mirror shows me not only what I want to see; but, also, that which I do not seek.

On further reflection, it is evident that the mirror is able to magnify because it distorts. By distorting, it presents an image that reflects reality; but it does so in a disproportionate way. While reflecting an image of reality, it distorts the reflection for its own purpose, that of accentuating a particular aspect.

Such an approach to the Church can be very dangerous. The reflection we have of it should be one that portrays it in its entirety: as it is, as it was, as it should be. However, once we flip our vision and begin magnifying certain aspects in order to have them appear bigger than life, we start distorting reality. That which is not important starts to cause us undue concern. Has this not caused the Church difficulties in the past? It still does.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that, in our religious behavior, we often display the limits and errors that disfigure the image of God in us. In a real sense, we are double-sided mirrors that reflect Christ. We can reflect the whole image with it proper proportions or we can magnify certain aspects and thus distort the reality of Christ. That reflects on our life in general.

One of the Masses on New Year's Day is celebrated for peace. But, that peace keeps eluding us because we tend to focus on what we consider unpleasant or problematic. That is a distortion. Life is a wonderful gift from the Lord. May we, in this year of grace 2007, stop worrying about the whiskers and just enjoy the whole face.