

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time

There is a story told about a little girl named Angelica. One day she spread out all her crayons on the floor and bent over a large piece of paper. For a long time, she worked and concentrated as hard as she could. When her older brother came by and asked what she was doing, she replied, "I'm drawing a picture of God." The brother smirked and said, "Nobody knows what God looks like!" Angelica simply replied, "They will when I'm finished!" What would your picture of God look like?

Since God the Creator is a pure spirit and hence doesn't have a body whatever Angelica draws will be correct since no one image can ever grasp the totality of God. While God the Creator isn't visible to the human eye the scriptures do reveal God through a variety of images. Take for example the first reading from the Prophet Ezekiel. There we hear God's Chosen People critiquing God, angrily stating that God's way is not fair. They are upset with God because they are in exile in a country far removed from their beloved homeland and its temple in Jerusalem. They blame God for their exile. God reminds them, however, that they are in exile because they turned away from doing what is right and to doing what is wicked and evil. As a result their exile is a death-like experience because the Lord of Life is no longer with them. The picture or image of God here is that of a just judge who rewards those who choose good and punishes those who choose evil.

The gospel reading presents us with the picture or image of God as a father who has two sons – one who at first refuses to do his father's will but later changes his mind and does it and the other who at first agrees to do his father's will but later changes his mind and does not do

it. Like any good father, God wants his children to freely choose to do his will out of love and not fear.

While God the Creator has no body, God the Son took on a body when he was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. This is how Jesus became the visible form of God. We celebrate this mystery on at Christmas. As Jesus himself tells us, "Whoever sees me sees the One who sent me." This is what makes Christianity unique from other religions – Jesus is both God and human. To know Jesus is to know God. To experience Jesus is to experience God.

St. Paul gives us a version of the incarnation story in the second reading today. He reminds us that Jesus has always been God but at one point in human history took on a human body. He not only humbled himself by taking on a human body but humbled himself even more by dying the death of a common criminal on the cross. It is precisely because of his humility, his willingness to do God's will that God exalted him, raising him from the death and bringing about his ascension into heaven.

What image or picture of God does St. Paul give us here? St. John the Evangelist would respond the image and picture of love. He writes, "God so loved the world that he gave us his only Son that all who believe in him may have eternal life." What images of God do you carry around within you? How do your images of God affect the way that you live your life?

