

HOMILY – NATIVITY OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Several months ago I gave a homily in which I asked us to see each other as God sees us. I used the phrase “see me”- not how I look, not how I appear, not how you want me to be but see me for who I am – a beloved child of God. Today, I ask us to look at ourselves, and ask ourselves whether we can repeat the responsorial psalm and truly believe what it says: “I praise you, for I am wonderfully made”. Let’s say it together: **“I PRAISE YOU, FOR I AM WONDERFULLY MADE”!**

Did that make you feel a little uncomfortable? Probably. We are not accustomed to seeing the wonderful creation we are in the eyes of God. We know our faults and if not, be assured others will remind us of what they are. We have been too often reminded of our ancestors Adam and Eve and how they messed up the whole human race. But that original sin can never erase the truth that **we are wonderfully made.**

So many people in our modern world suffer from a poor self-image. It is sad to think of how many parents think they are not good parents, how many teens think they are not cool enough, how many workers feel what they do is insignificant, how many think they are not so good looking, how many think everyone is smarter than they are, how many think they will be happier if they possessed more material things and how many good people think they are not as holy as someone else they know. The sad part is that we too often look for approval and affirmation from the wrong sources. Ask Jesus and we will hear: **“You are my beloved child and you are wonderfully made”.** Now, will we believe Him?

Several years ago in the late 70’s, I was still a member of the Salesian of Saint John Bosco and I was assigned to a parish in Laredo, Texas. While there I became deeply involved in a retreat program for youths, ages 17 and above. The program was closely modeled and approved after the adult Cursillo Movement. In working closely with these young adults, I was saddened at how many of them had such poor self-images. Many came from dysfunctional families where they desired to be accepted by their parents. Many were caught in life-styles where they looked for acceptance in gangs and in drugs and alcohol. Many were stereotyped for the clothes they wore, the length of their hair or where they lived or came from. They just didn’t feel good about themselves.

Aware of this, I often did an exercise with them. I would ask them to pretend that they had a mirror in their hand. I asked them to look into the mirror and ask themselves how they thought God saw them. After a while, I told them to look again and listen carefully. And I would say very slowly: **“You are my beloved child and you are wonderfully made”.** And one more time I would ask them to look again and pinch their cheek and say “Que chulo, que chula soy”. How beautiful I am. And I asked them whenever they felt bad about themselves. to go to a mirror and pinch their cheek and remember they are a child of God and wonderfully made.

Today’s responsorial psalm can be a wonderful prayer we could say every day. “I praise you for I am wonderfully made. Oh Lord, you have probed me, you know me. You know where I sit and stand, you understand my thoughts from afar...with all my ways you are familiar. You have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother’s womb. I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made, wonderful are your works. **I PRAISE YOU, FOR I AM WONDERFULLY MADE.**