

13. “*He looked at him with love*” (cf. Mk 10:21)

The Gospels make mention several times of Christ’s looking at certain persons. Andrew presented his brother Simon to Jesus, and Jesus “*looked at him*” (Jn 1:42). Peter had just denied his Master. “*The Lord turned around and looked at Peter*” (Lk 22:61). Peter went out and wept bitterly. A virtuous man asked Christ the way to eternal life. Mark tells us, with his gift for brief and evocative formulas, “*Jesus looked at him with love*” (Mk 10:21).

Love and looking go hand in hand. One must look in order to love, but one must also love in order to really look. “We see clearly only with the heart.”

Nothing reveals love better than the look in our eyes. The person who is the object of such a look makes no mistake about it. His or her whole being—I am speaking of the inner being, the secret self—is awakened, quivers, is filled with wonder, and goes forth and lives under the shock of this look of love. A new, unknown, ardent, intense life rises up within him or her. The look of love inspires love.

The most wonderful thing about another’s looking at us with love, is not only what we discover in this look about the soul and the love of this other person, but what we learn about ourselves. This look of love is actually a “mirror in which one sees oneself being seen,” to use the apt formula of Lanza del Vasto.

There are looks in which we see ourselves as contemptible, as some trifling quantity. When we are looked at with love, we discover that we are lovable in the strongest sense of the word, capable of arousing love in the heart of another. A mirror such as this tells us about ourselves, but not the way an inanimate and impassible mirror does. It speaks to us through the joy, astonishment, love and élan awakened in this other being at the sight of our inner self, and which the look of the other reveals to us.

It is a deeply moving experience to discover that we are worthy of being loved, capable of making love well up in another heart like a spring from a rock. How can we help being reconciled with ourselves? Love, esteem, self-respect—sentiments either unknown or at least scarcely burgeoning until then (and very often warped, at that), now spring up within us, and make us suddenly aware of our dignity. From that moment, we know that we have a reason for being, since we *exist for* someone else.

But there is something even more wonderful. This is the look of a Christian who discerns, in the light of Christ, that our innermost self is the soul of a child of God. He learns our eternal name spoken by God from all eternity—the name that brought us into being in tinto being in the divine Mind before we were called into existence. This look has the very poignant quality of being completely transparent to God’s own gaze at us, so that we discover in it the measure of God’s love for us.

I am certain that God would want every man and woman to encounter such a look at least once in his or her life.

But even those who love us most cannot always be actively loving. Their looks of love—and I am speaking, above all, of the soul’s gaze—are privileged and intermittent moments. Where God is concerned, we can be sure that he is always in the act of loving. This act, this fervent attention, is his presence of love to our soul.

Wonderment, too. Yes, God finds delight in the soul of his child, amazing as it may seem, because in this soul his gaze sees what is more real than it's own being. He sees the soul's eternal divine name.

God's look of love is more efficacious than any human look. This Divine gaze creates holiness, and is a communication of divine life.

If God's look of love is to produce its effects, the soul must be receptive, opening up its depths to it by an act of faith. This must be the faith of the man who acknowledges the love of his God for him—an active love, love in act. If this faith were fervent and not intermittent, God's look of love would never cease making the soul grow in holiness, just as the sun makes the crops ripen.

To pray is to become aware that God is looking at us with love. It is to open ourselves through faith to his creative, regenerative, divinizing and beatifying action. Then love for God, *charity*, wells up in the soul.

To pray well, we must believe that God looks with love at each and every one of us.

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