

Lent 4B - 2024

### **We Become His Son**

There is a story that comes out of the Bedouin culture. "Bedouin" is the Aramaic name for "desert dwellers." These people live much as the characters of the Old Testament did. During a heated argument, according to this story, a young Bedouin struck and killed a friend of his. Knowing the ancient, inflexible customs of his people, the young man fled, running across the desert under the cover of darkness, seeking safety. He went to the black tent of the tribal chief in order to seek his protection. The old chief took the young Arab in. The chief assured him that he would be safe until the matter could be settled legally.

The next day, the young man's pursuers arrived, demanding the murderer be turned over to them. They would see that justice would prevail in their own way. "But I have given my word," protested the chief. "But you don't know whom he killed!" they countered. "I have given my word," the chief repeated. "He killed your son!" one of them blurted out. The chief was deeply and visibly shaken with his news. He stood speechless with his head bowed for a long time. The accused and the accusers as well as curious onlookers waited breathlessly. What would happen to the young man? Finally the old man raised his head. "Then he shall become my son," he informed them, "and everything I have will one day be his."

The young man certainly didn't deserve such generosity. And that, of course, is the point. Love in its purest form is beyond comprehension. No one can merit it. It is freely given. It is agape, the love of God. Look to the cross. At the cross we encounter love in its purest form. (by King Duncan from *Collected Sermons*, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com))

### **I feel God's Pleasure**

Fr. Ron Rolheiser talks about the joy he feels in teaching. He refers to Eric Liddell, the Olympic runner, whose story is featured in the Oscar-winning movie, *Chariots of Fire*, once made this comment: "When I run, I feel God's pleasure." He didn't make this comment lightly. As his biography and *Chariots of Fire* make clear, Eric Liddell, in his quest to win an Olympic gold medal was motivated more by his faith than by his own ego. His faith had him believe that, since God gave him this unique talent, God, not unlike any proud parent, took a genuine delight in seeing him use that gift. In his heart, he sensed that God was pleased whenever he exercised that talent to its optimum. Moreover, that inner sense that God was happy with his use of his talent filled him, Eric, with a wonderful energy whenever he ran.

Seen from that perspective, we see that the root and source of his motivation and pleasure in running was, ultimately, not his desire to win gold medals and popular adulation, though clearly no one is immune to these. Rather he was motivated by an inner sense that God had given him a special gift, that God wanted him to use that gift to its fullest, and that God was happy when he optimized that gift. Like everyone else who is human, he, no doubt, enjoyed the adulation he received for his successes, but he knew too that the deepest joy he felt in using his gift had its ultimate source in God and not his own ego.

And this, I believe, is true of us, everybody. When anyone uses properly the gifts that God gave him or her, God will take pleasure in that. After all God gave us that gift and that gift was given us for a reason.

Not long after I felt that burst of pleasure and energy from again teaching inside a classroom, I was talking to a colleague, a very gifted young teacher just beginning his teaching career. He shared about how much he enjoys teaching but how he worries too that the pleasure he derives from it is somehow too much connected to his ego. I gave him the Liddell quote, assuring him that, whenever he teaches well, God takes pleasure in it. He much appreciated Liddell's comment.

And so should we all. We shouldn't feel guilty for exercising the gifts that God gave us, even though our motivations will never be completely pure. Whenever we use a God-given talent to do something well, God takes pleasure in it ... and so too should we. Fr. Ron Rolheiser

### **God Can Make Something Out of You**

Some years ago, the great boxer, Mohammed Ali, was asked by a ghetto youth how he could quit school and start a boxing career since he had bad grades. Ali smiled at the young man and said in his poetic fashion:

"Stay in college and get the knowledge. And stay there! Til you're through Cause if God can make penicillin out of moldy bread, He can make something out of you."

This is the good news of John 3. Because God so loved the world, He SENT His only son to make something out of us; when we accept Him into our lives and commit our hearts to Him, then He gives us new life in this world - and new life in the world to come. (by James W. Moore from *Encounters with Christ*, [www.Sermons.com](http://www.Sermons.com))