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Christ and cerebral palsy

by Michael Leach

Soul Seeing

"Christ plays in ten thousand places, lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his to the Father through the features of men's faces." -- Gerard Manley Hopkins

How easy it is to see the face of Christ in the eyes of a baby or the limbs of a child racing a kite or the features of a movie star. The key to eternal life is to behold the loveliness of Christ in the eyes of a child born blind, the limbs of a teenager with cerebral palsy, the features of a woman scarred with burns. The truth is -- the beauty is -- each wears the face of Christ and they all play as one.

How many times have I averted my eyes from a picture in *TIME* of a starving baby with flies on her face or didn't pay attention to the fellow slumped over in a wheelchair at a wedding or found an excuse not to visit a friend wasting away with cancer or pretended the family at the diner who had a noisy child with Down syndrome didn't exist? And what a blessing it becomes to begin to see with spiritual eyes and behold the image of the emaciated baby as she really is, *whole*, to touch the cripple in the wheelchair and say hello, to visit a friend or acquaintance in the hospital or nursing home with a great big smile, and to stop by the table with the Down child and touch his shoulder and tell him and his parents what a wonderful family they are. The truth is -- the wonder is -- that the words of Christ are literally true: "Whatever you do unto these, you do for me." And what we do for Christ we do for them and for ourselves and for the whole human race. For all of us, each of us, are one.

The new science of metapsychiatry validates this teaching by demonstrating that we all have a spiritual faculty to enter a rehab room and see the Christ who plays in 10,000 places, to help a homeless woman push her shopping cart across the street and know that the story of St. Christopher is the story of us all. Metapsychiatry calls this ability to realize what is really before our eyes the faculty of beholding. Beholding is a higher faculty than the intellect or imagination or intuition, but one we have not been

taught to cultivate. To behold is to see the invisible (what is real and lasting) in the visible (what appears and disappears). The body comes and goes, but the spirit remains forever. St. Paul teaches: "Look not at the things that which are seen but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal while the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Psychiatrist Thomas Hora (1914-95), who founded metapsychiatry upon the teachings of Jesus and spiritual learnings from other religions as well as psychiatry, writes:

There is more to man than meets the eye. We all have the faculty to discern spiritual qualities in the world. We can see honesty; we can see integrity; we can see beauty; we can see love; we can see goodness; we can see joy; we can see peace; we can see harmony; we can see intelligence; and so forth. None of these things has any form; none of these things can be imagined; none of these things is tangible, and yet they can be seen. What is the organ that sees these invisible things? Some people call it the soul, spirit, or consciousness. Man is a spiritual being endowed with spiritual faculties of perception.

Each of us can behold the truth of being in all of us.

Prayer: *Jesus, the next time I see someone with what doctors call cerebral palsy or Down syndrome, grace me with the sight to realize what is really there: goodness, innocence, love, joy, intelligence, and abundant beauty. You embraced lepers and felt purity and the scales fell from their faces. Help me to know, right now: When I look at anyone I am looking my self, I am looking at you, for all of us, each of us, is a spiritual aspect of you and only you! God bless everyone! I close my eyes now and remember someone I've passed by or ignored and ask you to see love for me. I am learning that I can behold you and everyone with the same eyes that you behold us. I am going to sit still now and listen ? and see. Thank you, Jesus. I have to go now and call someone up or maybe go to the hospital.*

[Michael Leach is publisher emeritus and editor at large of Orbis Books, and the author of *Why Stay Catholic? Unexpected Answers to a Life-Changing Question.*]

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