

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent 2018

I brought my violin this morning. (Chaconne plays). You may recognize this piece. It's the Bach Chaconne for unaccompanied violin. It's one of the masterpieces of the violin repertoire and one of the most difficult. Oh how I wish I could play it! I've tried. Just to "live within" the music. But it's so far beyond me. Perhaps if I had started studying the instrument when I was a child when something in me fell in love with the violin, but my dear mother who was forced to play when she was a child said no. I had to wait until my 20's to begin torturing everyone around me. But the sounds of screech and scratch were music to my ears. For me to be "transfigured" would mean that I would be playing the Chaconne.

And look! How can it possibly be that these pieces of wood glued together in a certain shape with f holes to allow the sound to escape and a bridge over which 4 strings would be strung and a bow with horse hair dragged along those strings would be capable of producing some of the most exquisite sounds known to human kind? Who could have ever imagined something so exquisitely beautiful in something so ordinary? Transcendent, divine sounds coming from something made of really ordinary, down to earth "stuff", wood and glue and gut or steel and a hank of horse hair. What could be more ordinary?

And he was transfigured before their eyes, his clothes became whiter than any bleacher could bleach them.

This moment of transfiguration is the "divine" within Jesus emanating from his human nature. There is a moment when the essential essence of Jesus is seen by the disciples and the voice is heard. "This is my beloved Son, Listen to him". It is God's Chaconne, the exquisite, breathtaking beauty of Jesus' inner life shining forth! From the "ordinary" flesh and blood person of Jesus of Nazareth, his inner self, human and divine blazes out,

The inspiration for this morning's homily I owe to a young Jesuit who is here for a few months working in the Thrive project. His name is Christopher Alt. As part of his time working in Jesuit ministries, he wanted to share some reflections at Mass. He did so a week or so ago

and he began with a story of a young violinist who appeared one day at the 10 years ago at the L'Enfant Plaza Metro Station in DC, opened his violin and started to play.

This was an experiment arranged by the Washington Post to see if people rushing to work would stop and listen to “beauty”. During the time he played, more than 1000 people passed him by. The Post wanted to know, “In a banal setting at an inconvenient time, would beauty transcend?” As it turned out the violinist was Joshua Bell and he was playing on a 3 million dollar Stradivarius. *In the three-quarters of an hour that Joshua Bell played, seven people stopped what they were doing to hang around and take in the performance, at least for a minute. Twenty-seven gave money, most of them on the run -- for a total of \$32 and change. That leaves the 1,070 people who hurried by, oblivious, many only three feet away, few even turning to look.*

The author of the article in the Washington Post, Gene Weingarten, says that if you watch the video, it seems at first if the violinist is a “ghost”, a specter, someone unreal and transcendent, creating this beautiful music transfiguring the time and space in this ordinary metro station. But on closer examination, it is all the passersby who are truly “ghostly”, unaware of the reality that is right before their very eyes. As Weingarten says,  
Only then do you see it: He is the one who is real. They are the ghosts.

Unaware of the reality, who it is, right before our very eyes? Wasn't this the experience of Jesus of Nazareth? He was right before the very eyes of everyone, disciples, Pharisees, passersby. Why could they not see the exquisite, divine beauty emanating from him?

And what about ourselves? Will we stop, look and listen to the Chaconne God has composed, Jesus of Nazareth whose beauty is rooted in his humanity but whose beauty transcends time and space and all the limits we impose?

Speaking of beauty, our symbol for the Second Week of Lent is a “transfigured” arrangement of greens and flowers in a jar of clay. This is what Ron Franco, parishioner who arranged it has to say about it.

*The greens on the bottom and the willows that stick out represent the earth. There’s 3 kinds of greens representing Peter, James and John.*

*The earth is surrounded by white flowers, some as buds and others in bloom (changing from one form to another), which make up the cloud of heaven.*

*The orange and yellow represent the transfigured Christ coming out of the clouds. All connected together in the jar of clay, symbol of Jesus’ humanity and ours.*

And what is your inner light? What would a transfigured you look like or sound like or be like? Whatever that would be, you would be the most YOU! Yes, Human, Yes, Divine, created in the image and likeness of God, created and transfigured in the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.

(Chaconne plays)