

GOOGLE IT ALL YOU WANT...

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. 1Cor 13 11-13

In today's reading the great spiritual psychologist Paul says that we don't fully understand ourselves. "For now we see in a mirror dimly," says Paul and "Now we know only in part." In one word, we are a mystery to ourselves. This of course makes sense since God is the great mystery, and we are made in his image. We affirm this truth ritually every Sunday, where the mystery of God and the mystery of ourselves stand like bookends in our worship. Our very first hymn chanted at 10:30AM was "Khorhurt Khorin" about the profound mystery which is God, and the last words, if the sermon is done well, is about the beautiful mystery we are to ourselves.

Well maybe you think you do know yourself. After all, in our digital age we have all the information of the world available at our fingertips; from human genomes to distant galaxies. And it turns out the internet knows a lot about us personally too. Maybe you know that there is a buried setting on google accounts that allows you to see what it knows about you. I checked mine while preparing this sermon. It knows that I am 45-57 years old, I am married and a parent, that we own a home and what my income level is. It knows the details of my taste in music and favorite sports teams. It basically knows everything about me as a consumer. But, alas, we are more than consumers. Google knows almost nothing about the deeper parts of me. It thinks I am in the computer industry in a large company, it can't grasp that I am a priest and work in a church. It knows nothing of the work we have done in Armenia. And it certainly isn't aware of the puzzling mysteries that make up the ups and downs of my life. Why do I get so anxious and wrapped up in problems that I know will be alright in the end? Why do I have such a tough time living in the present when I am fully aware it is the only time I have? Why, do I have such a tough time loving others well, when I want and need to do this?

We are a mystery to ourselves. Neither science nor Google can deal with mysteries, but praise God, the Armenian Church does. The Armenian Church says that you are a mystery to yourself, so stop trying to grasp yourself from other things, people, even God. Instead, start trying to give yourself away to other things, people and God, for "You can never grasp a mystery, you can only be grasped by it."

Here an old Armenian word, Chakatagir, is very helpful. It comes from the time before Christ, but after Christ it comes into full meaning. Chakatagir means destiny, and its roots are chakat, which means forehead, and gir, which means writing. And so your destiny, who you are to be, is that which is written on your forehead. A very beautiful image indeed, but if your destiny is written on your forehead you run into a couple of problems. The first is that you can't see what is written on your forehead yourself; recall that no one had mirrors in pagan times. But even with a mirror, Paul reminds us today, the reflection we see of who we are and what we are made for, is often dark and cloudy, like a dream we see and know in part, but not in full.

But if we can't see clearly what is on our foreheads, who can? Well, the God who like a loving father made us, loves us and wants to write our story with us. The God who made us not to be separate from him, but through his Son to be reconciled. The God who has the keys to the best story, the best life for you and I if we can just open our hearts, to trust and abide in him always. God sees what is written on our forehead, because he has put it there and wants to co-author our lives in His grace. Let us live our best lives with him, through worship, reflection and prayer.

And who else can see clearly what is on our foreheads? Well those who are around us and see us up close all the time, our spouses, children and dear friends. They can see good things in you and I that we can't see yet, and encourage us to rise up to them. They can also see the dark shadows in you and I that we would rather not see, helping us bring our brokenness before God in order that it be redeemed in His grace. Let us be spiritual friends to those we love, journeying alongside each other as we mature in the Spirit.

In conclusion dear friends, Google it all you want, but we will always remain a mystery to ourselves. We will never be able to clearly grasp who we are in this world, the full meaning of our lives and the ultimate purpose to where all this is heading. The mirror will always be cloudy and the knowing will always be in part. But that's why love is of the greatest importance, says St. Paul. For what we can't see of ourselves, is revealed through God's love and our love of each other, grasping us in what we ourselves cannot grasp, now and always and unto the ages of ages; amen.