

Behold: Slow & Ruminare

40 Hours Devotion — Rev. David Hereshko

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Love scripture, there's something in the scripture that's already in it that helps us slow things down. It's almost like a stop sign, a yield sign: slow down, ruminare, enter into it, take your time, ponder on it.

And it's just one word, but it's in the Bible over a thousand times, and the word is "behold." Whenever we see "behold" in the Bible, there are different levels of the mystery or the teaching. It could simply be, "Hey, look at this."

There's a moral teaching, but it's always telling us to pay attention. When we hear "behold," there's something coming after.

So as soon as we get to that "behold," we should be ready then to slow down. What's coming now?

What am I called to enter into and meditate upon? How does this phrase or sentence that is coming affect the way I understand things, the way I understand myself?

How does it affect my spiritual life, my everyday life? Simply one word: "behold." There's a tradition in Catholic spirituality of meditating and praying on the scriptures, and it's actually a word that means chewing the cud.

You know, animals, when they chew and they put back, they don't finish up, they bring it back up, they chew it, cows and sheep. It's "ruminare." It's actually a Catholic spiritual word that's used in meditation of the Word of God.

We come upon something in the scriptures, and we just slow down, stop, set it down, meditate on it. We chew on it.

We think about it. We meditate.

We ponder on the truth. How does that truth enter into my being?

How can I experience and embrace the mystery that is being given to us? So this spiritual tradition of ruminating on the Word, chewing on it, allowing ourselves to go again and again into the same message is really the same concept of the word "behold."

Here we are at the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. How about we turn this month of May to our Blessed Mother and see that she is our guide and our teacher, when we can look at her life and see the people that behold with her to help us to better behold and enter into the great mystery of the Holy Eucharist, to slow down, to ponder, to enter into, to experience the mystery and embrace the life of God in the Holy Eucharist. It's almost as if when we come to the Holy Eucharist, we're just hearing the word "behold."

We look at our Blessed Mother and the beloved disciple at the cross of Jesus.

We can look right back there and see the imagery that is right there. And we see the beloved Mother and the beloved disciple. That beloved disciple represents every disciple of Jesus Christ is the beloved disciple, and the Blessed Mother is His mother. And at the cross, Jesus, right before He says when He goes on to say what I'm going to say, He says, "Now it's all finished." In other words, "Now it's all complete. What I need to do."

And what does He say to Mary, His mother? "Behold."
Slow down. Yield. Get ready.
"Behold your son."

He turns to the beloved disciple, each and every one of us, and says, "Behold."
Slow down. Yield. Meditate.
"Your mother."

Jesus at the cross, what does that mean, "behold"?

I'm supposed to think about this, pray about this. Isn't Mary the mother of Jesus?

Isn't Jesus the son of Mary? Well, He's saying that she's our mother and we're her son.

There must be another family dynamic coming into play that's not by blood, but by the Spirit. When we share in the life of the Spirit, we are entering into the life of faith with Mary as our mother to guide and strengthen us, to lead us to her Son in this beautiful family of the Church.

"Behold." "Behold."
Slow down. Yield. Ponder. Ruminant. Chew on it. And allow ourselves to embrace this.

We recognize and see this truth and think, "What do I mean? But do I embrace it?"

Do I turn to our mother Mary as my mother in faith? Do I turn to her as a child, to a mother, and seek her guidance and strength to teach us how to go to her Son, to ask her to bring us to her eternal Son?

As she teaches us, and another way we can look at the word "behold" and let Mary teach us again to enter into how do we deal with the mystery that's beyond our comprehension in the Holy Eucharist? How do we respond to something that's beyond anything that our minds can grasp?

We go to our Blessed Mother." The Annunciation. The angel says to Mary, "Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son."

She knows she hasn't been with a man.

She is told that she will bear a son, and His name will be Jesus. It'll be by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her mind is beyond comprehension of this mystery that nobody can grasp.

And what is her response?

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to your will."

Mary took this mystery that's beyond all comprehension.

She accepted the ways of her God, the angel speaking to her, and said, "Behold, recognize this. Ponder on it. Allow yourself to enter into this great mystery that's being bestowed upon you."

And she entered into that. She chewed on it.

She thought about it. She slowed down. She yielded. She turned to the mystery. She embraced God, and He embraced her. And in so doing, her response to the mystery that's beyond all comprehension is, "Be it done to me according to your will.

I can't grasp it, but your will be done."

Does this sound like a strengthening and a teaching of our Blessed Mother, who we are her children, to teach us how to enter into a mystery that's beyond our comprehension and how do we respond?

Mary, throughout the Bible, we see her being told things by her Son that was confusing about suffering, death, about things that might take place and could be one thing and another. And what does it always say that Mary does?

She ponders them in her heart. She ponders them, ruminates on them.

It's as if she hears the word "behold," "slow down," "yield," "listen," "embrace," "experience," "encounter."

She pondered all these things in her heart.

Here we are in the presence of our God who took human flesh and died upon the cross. Well, the night before He died, He said, "Take bread and take wine. This is my body. This is my blood. Do this in memory of me."

The real divine presence of our God, glorifying the flesh, is present in all the altars and tabernacles of the world. That's the great mystery.

We need to ponder.

We need to ruminate.

We need to turn to our mother and say, "Mary, Mom, help me to do as you did with the great mystery in your life and to give everything over."

How are you able to simply say, "Be it done to you according to your will." Be it done according to you, God, because her faith was strengthened, my God. She was renewed and strengthened in all that she did. And we are called to turn to her to do what she always does, to bring us to her Son.

When we are in adoration, as the Church always says, in adoration, we are coming from the Mass that we just experienced, and we are moving toward the next.

It is in Mass that we enter into communion with God in the Holy Eucharist.

It is in Mass that we enter into the sacrifice of giving ourselves with Jesus, who gives Himself entirely to the Father. And in that act of the Mass, our God becomes present. And at the next Mass, our God will become present on the altar.

And adoration is our time in between to reflect on what took place at that Mass and the reality of it. It's as if we walk into our church in time of adoration, whether in the monstrance or in the tabernacle.

I talk to people often, and they say, "It's beautiful that the Lord's present." He's not more present tonight in the monstrance than He is in the tabernacle. He appears to us in a greater way because we have to use our sight.

How can God be that much more present from there to there? We have to enter into the mystery, the great magnitude of God's presence, that whenever our church is open and we walk into that church, the divine presence of God is there.

And we have the great mystery that we are so blessed to be visually more appeared to us in the monstrance.

Adoration is reflecting on the beauty of the worship we had at Mass and strengthening us and renewing us as we ponder and ruminate and think about and enter into the mysteries of the Mass.

So as we are strengthened and renewed in this time of adoration to enter into the mystery of the Holy Eucharist in adoration, we're taking what we've experienced, entering into the mystery in the present, and moving toward the celebration of it in the end.

It takes us back to that Mass that we celebrated last.

And it's at that Mass when the bread and wine are consecrated, the body and blood of Jesus Christ are present, and the priest takes the chalice and the Blessed Sacrament of the host.

And he holds it up and says, "Behold the Lamb of God.

Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world."

We're beholding God at that time.

We're beholding the sacramental presence of our God in flesh, glorified, experiencing the realm of the eternal in the world that we live now.

"Behold" twice, we say it one after another when we hold up the precious Body and Blood of our Lord. Do we recognize at that time? Do we slow down?

Do we ruminate? Do we understand that this is the God who died on the cross, and He is the Lamb who sacrificed Himself for us?

"Behold the Lamb of God."

Do we recognize that our sins are forgiven by Jesus dying on the cross, His blood, not the blood of a lamb, but His own blood, to give Himself in time so that our sins can be removed and we can live in union with Him?

Do we think about that when those words are being said?

Because we hear those words, "Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world."

We have to recognize it in the scriptures. It's teaching us how to enter into the Mass. In the Mass, it's teaching us how to enter into the scriptures. In scriptures and the Mass, it's teaching us how to enter into adoration. And the adoration helps us enter back into scripture and the Mass.

This is what happens when we ruminate, when we slow down, when we chew on it, when we embrace it, encounter our Lord in the depths of our hearts, not simply in passing.

Coming up, we will have an opportunity to hear the word "behold" on Ascension Thursday. As we celebrate Ascension Thursday, we have an opportunity to listen to that word as we will hear our Gospel proclaimed on Ascension Thursday.

Jesus says these words when He commands His disciples throughout and to baptize, to teach the world. He says, "Behold, I will remain with you always until the end of time."

Our God said He would remain with us always.

Here we are in adoration. He'll remain with you. Wait a minute. Let me chew on this. Let me ponder on this. Let me ask the Lord to help me with this. Let me think. Let me yield. Slow down. Let me wonder about this.

If Jesus is God, Ascension Thursday, He's in heaven. Jesus said, "I'll remain with you always. This is my body. This is my blood."

Jesus is present at the Mass on the altar. He remains with us in the Holy Eucharist that we placed in the tabernacle. Jesus is present in the tabernacle. He's present in the monstrance. He's with me in my heart when I receive Him in Holy Communion.

So Jesus is in heaven.

He's on the altar.

He's in the tabernacle.

He's in the monstrance.

He's in my heart.

The same God is from heaven. He's in me.

This is the reality of slowing down, ruminating, listening, allowing the truth of God to enter deep into our hearts where we can experience the depths of His love.

Our God wants to be with us more than anything else.

Let's listen to our reading again tonight from the Book of Revelation:

“Then I saw new heavens and a new earth. The former heavens and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no longer. I also saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out, ‘This is God dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and He shall be their God, who is always with them.

He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away.’”

That image of eternal life, which eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it hasn't even dawned on man what God has prepared for us, when we try to understand through this word, but yet we begin to taste it now, that same God dwells in our hearts in the Holy Eucharist.

Behold.

Ruminate.

Listen.

Slow down.

Stop.

Experience.

Encounter.

Embrace the presence of God within our hearts.

“Behold the Lamb of God.

Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.

Behold, I am with you always until the end of the age.

Behold, His dwelling place is with man.”

May we behold the truth of the mystery as our mother Mary has taught us to behold and then to embrace and give ourselves entirely over to our loving God and tell Him:

“Lord, I cannot understand this fully, but be it done to me according to your will.”