



# ST. RAYMOND DE PEÑAFORT

Lent

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Reflections

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Youth and Young Adult Formation

One of my favorite books to read during Lent is "Life of the Beloved," by Henri Nouwen. Nouwen shares a beautiful reflection on how our identity is rooted in the fact that we are God's beloved and how our perspective on the meaning of life will change once we are convinced of our identity. Nouwen writes, "the real 'work' of prayer is to become silent and listen to the voice that says good things about me. To gently push aside and silence the many voices that question my goodness and to trust that I will hear the voice of blessing-- that demands real effort."

Today's Gospel reminds us of our identity. Jesus led Peter, John, and James up to a mountain to pray. During this time away from all distractions, Jesus "was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light." (Matthew 17: 2) The apostles were amazed, and while Peter was speaking, "a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.'" (Matthew 17:5)

In this Gospel, God reminds us of who Jesus is as he begins His journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, that will lead him to the Cross. Jesus' identity lies in the fact that He is loved by God. The other moment in scripture where we hear God speak of Jesus as His beloved Son is at the moment of Jesus' baptism. It is after His baptism that Jesus begins His public ministry. Jesus is loved by God, and He shares that love with all of us. It was out of radical love that Jesus gave His life for each of us so that we would have life in abundance.



Jesus became man to remind us of our inherent dignity and worth. Jesus came to shower us with a love that is compassionate, merciful, and unconditional. His death on the cross is an act of sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. Pope Francis reminds us that “we are the recipients of a love that has no equal on earth.”

I remember a powerful moment in an adoration chapel where I felt Jesus inviting me to a deeper relationship with Him as I sat before the Blessed Sacrament. After this moment, my desire to pray and have daily conversations with Jesus grew. As my understanding of who Jesus is grew, so did my understanding of who I am: I am God’s beloved daughter. For the first time in my life, I was experiencing a radical love that I had never experienced before. This awareness of God’s love for me was life-changing. In today’s world, it is easy to listen to the voices that put doubt in our hearts and minds. The voices that say we are not good enough or loved. The voices that make us restless and unhappy. I have learned that through prayer and those moments of silence, the voice of God becomes louder and begins to silence those other voices.

As we continue our Lenten journey, take some time to reflect on how much God loves you. Imagine God speaking loudly over you, saying,

**“You are my beloved son/daughter, with whom I am well pleased!”**

Allow God’s voice to speak loudly into your heart and transform your life with His love! And if you are looking for a great book to read, I highly recommend reading "Life of the Beloved"...it will give you great insights to reflect on!