

**T**here is a new internet sensation, called, Susan Boyle. Have you heard of her? She appeared on "Britain's Got Talent" program. People were having a difficult time reconciling the appearance of the singer with the voice that came out of her.

I think she took the world by a surprise, because no one expected that "someone who looks like her could sing *like that [italic not mine]*." When people hear a beautiful female voice singing, they tend to imagine that the owner of the voice would also look beautiful and young. Too bad, Susan Boyle would disappoint such an imagination: one might find her looking a bit homely, older, and pudgy.

From all this, what I can surmise is that the world has been brought up in such a prejudiced way, that when a woman with *that* look sang *that* well, the whole world suffered mass cognitive dissonance. People just could not connect what they saw with what they heard.

**T**his generation is so steeped in the human point of view that sees and appreciates only the superficiality of the outward appearance. That human point of view allows the outward appearance to determine the inner beauty of a person. It assumes that the outward appearance determine the talent and character of the person, as well. It treats the outward appearance as the talent itself, while dismissing the true talent, if the outward appearance does not follow people's expectation.

Such biases are quite obvious in women's sports. If a tennis player has a certain look, she gets all the lucrative endorsements and the advantageous play schedule stacked in her favor. The player with the lesser look is overlooked by the sponsors, even if she won the U.S. Open Championship.

If the female golfer has a certain look, the T.V. camera follows her play, even when she is trailing outside the top 20 players. Another player with the lesser

look is ignored by the T.V. camera, even if she is inside the top 10.

Such a bias is what Apostle Paul would identify as "the human point of view," in his letter to the Corinthians:

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer (v. 16).

The early Christians found inspirations in the text of prophet Isaiah. The prophet describes the outward appearance of the Messiah that did not impress many people:

<sup>2</sup> For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. <sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Is. 53).

Prophet Isaiah was describing how the Messiah would look like, and be treated, according to the human point of view.

Apparently, the Messiah was not expected to become the ancient world's pop sensation.

Obviously, it is not only the modern pop culture that expected the inner beauty to be consistent in its outward appearance; the ancients harbored the same biases, as well.

Another lectionary text also points to this "human point of view." Prophet Samuel was sent to find the next king of Judah, and sat down in the tent that belonged to Jesse. He is now interviewing Jesse's sons one by one (I Sam. 16):

16:6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the LORD."

Samuel was so impressed by the way Eliab looked, he told himself that he was the one. But God corrected Samuel with a different way of looking at a person:

16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

That is the human point of view Apostle Paul was talking about: people look on the outward appearance, and make the judgment on the person. Now we identify such human points of view as prejudices: we discriminate according to the good looks or homely looks, the rich looks or poor looks, or according to what is visible to the naked eyes, such as gender, race, age, class, ability, sexual orientation, etc. Surely, God does not care what hair color one has or which country one is born. Yes, God loves gays and lesbians just as any other straights. God sees the character of a person, while human beings see only what is visible to their eyes.

The genuine, antique look is nothing more than an

appearance: it is not an antique. The new, improved, old-fashioned, home-made style soup still comes in a can: no matter how good it may be, what's in the can is not home-made. God focuses on what is in the heart of the person—the person's character, intention, and action.

The whole thing about fashion, style, house, cars, status, and other tangible things is that they are the grounds for boasting in outward appearance. The critical characteristic that sets the secular person apart from the spiritual person is that the secular person boasts in the outward appearance. Here we must understand that "boasting" does not merely mean showing off one's wealth and status for everyone to see. It refers to how much the outward appearance *preoccupies* one's heart. That is, how much energy, time, and focus the person is willing to invest into the outward appearance, and how much of the person's mind they preoccupy.

Spiritual people seek spiritual things in life, and the spiritual

things are usually of the unseen and imperishable nature. The spiritual strength comes from the spiritual reservoir a person has built up for himself. If our minds are preoccupied with the materialistic things, with the outward appearance, it is really difficult to become spiritual: they do interfere with our focus on prayers.

It is the human point of view that pursues what is beautiful to behold. I would not say that it is wrong to seek what is beautiful. After all, the human mind is *human*. It does what is human, and that is natural. But I would say it is wrong, if the human mind fails to seek what is spiritual. That is wrong, because the human being that is stripped of the spiritual dimension is nothing more than an object, an animal. Such human beings who cannot see beyond the outward appearance of another human being will treat other human beings as an object or an animal. It is wrong to treat a human being as an object or an animal.

**S**pirituality is, in a way, the pursuit of what is unseen and imperishable. The spiritual person seeks the beauty that is invisible to the naked human eyes. That beauty is exactly what God sees in the heart of the person. Being spiritual means sharing the divine point of view—sharing the way God looks at another human being, and at the world.

When we begin to gain this divine point of view, and begin to see others through this point of view, we become the new creation. We go through a fundamental change in our perception of the world and ourselves. That change is what Apostle calls a new creation:

5:17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

**I** want to share this story I heard from someone. A poor man lived in a rural area that did not have running water. He had to go to the well every morning a

few hundred yards away. He walked the rural dirt road with the two 10-gallon buckets hanging from the yoke over the shoulders.

Unfortunately, one of the buckets leaked water. He had to stop in the midway, because he had to balance out the load: it was too difficult to walk with the lopsided load. Because of this leakage, he had to make the trip twice. The man complained loudly every morning. He felt miserable, hauling the load of water. He felt depressed, because he was too poor to replace the leaky pail. Then one spring day, he put the load down, and let out a long tirade of complaint, as he recovered from the aching back and crushed shoulders. Then he noticed something: there were wildflowers blooming, but only on one side of the road!

He wondered why the flowers bloomed only on one side. Then he realized: he watered them on the way home every morning. Now he does not complain

anymore. He has no plans to replace the leaky container. He joyfully waters the flowers on the way home, and enjoys them every morning. He is happy to haul the water. He became a new man!

Being spiritual is like it: one suddenly notices the beauty of the wildflowers in the midst of the daily pain and misery. Being a new creation in Christ is like it: one suddenly sees the beauty of the wildflowers that his daily pain and misery helped grow.

Let us let the old pass away. Our painful past, our memories of sufferings—those are gone. May you let go of the human point of view, and see the world with the divine point of view, and discover the wildflowers growing on your journey. If we are in Christ, we become the new creation. Let everything old pass away, for everything has become new. May you begin the new life now as the new creation in Christ.