

## Staring in the Mirror

September 27

When King Louis XIV waltzed into his ornate chapel to worship and be worshiped, he often heard Jacques Benigne Bossuet, one of the most eloquent French Catholics. Bossuet, born in Dijon on **September 27, 1627**, had discovered the Bible, opened it to Isaiah and was gripped. Running to his father, he read him chapter after chapter. In time, Bossuet learned the Bible almost by heart.

Bossuet also gained a reputation as an orator, keeping fellow students in rapt attention during addresses. Eventually he was appointed court preacher at Versailles. His sermons were “unexcelled upon earth.” It was said, “Bossuet is the most powerful, the most truly eloquent speaker that our language has ever known.”

He was also blunt. In some sermons, he addressed the king by name; and on one occasion he earnestly implored Louis to abandon his adulteries and return to his wife. Unfortunately, Bossuet’s eloquence did little good. The nobility sat listening to him, dressed in powdered wigs, high-heeled shoes, and gaudy costumes. They wept during Bossuet’s messages, but left unchanged. Here, for example, is an excerpt from one of his sermons that should have made an impact. As it was, the nobility listened and cried and nodded and went their way as before:

*The honour of the world makes us attribute to ourselves all that we do, and ends by setting us upon pedestals like little gods. Well, proud and self-complacent soul, thus deified by the honour of the world, see how the eternal, the living God abases Himself in order to confound you! Man makes himself God through pride, God makes Himself man through humility! Man falsely attributes to himself what belongs to God; and God, in order to teach him to humble himself, takes what belongs to man. This is the remedy for insolence! This alone can confound the honour of the world—that Hill of Calvary, that Cross of Shame, Jesus Christ the Incarnate God, our Pattern, our Master, our King.*



Obey God’s message! Don’t fool yourselves by just listening to it. If you hear the message and don’t obey it, you are like people who stare at themselves in a mirror and forget what they look like as soon as they leave. [James 1:22-24](#)

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<sup>1</sup>Morgan, R. J. 2000, c1997. *On this day : 265 amazing and inspiring stories about saints, martyrs & heroes* (electronic ed.) . Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville