

Homily
Memorial of Saint John Vianney, Priest
Friday of the 17th Week in OT
August 4, 2023

Do you know any famous people? Someone everyone else sees and goes, “Wow! That’s So-and-So, the famous person. And you respond, “Yeah, that’s right. I know that person. Nice enough, but no big deal.” I went to high school with Don Mattingly. He played for the New York Yankees in the 80’s and 90’s and was the American League batting champion in 1984, just edging out his teammate, Dave Winfield. Since then, he has gone on to coach various teams in Major League Baseball. For me, he was a standout football, basketball and baseball player in high school. And he walked the same halls, went to his locker, and sat down next to us, in homeroom, math and English class, just like everyone else. No big deal. We took him for granted because he was one of us, the same as us.

Do you know someone so well that you kind of take them for granted? My wife is a much better person than Don Mattingly, in my humble opinion. She is kind, caring, faithful, loyal, loving. I know Don. He wasn’t any of those things, at least not to me. Yet, do I recognize those things in my wife every moment of every day? Sadly, I do take her for granted from time to time. I have to remember to appreciate her for all she does and all she is to me.

Do you have someone in your life that deserves to be put on a pedestal, yet all too often is not appreciated as much as he or she deserves?

In a few moments, Jesus will become present to us on this altar. In a few moments, Jesus will join with us in our reception of Him, eaten and consumed as He commands us to do. He will humble Himself, as He does every hour of every day throughout the world, for the redemption of our souls. Do we give Jesus His due recognition? Do we stand in awe of Him, Who humbled Himself to become one of us in all ways but sin, Who freely entered His Passion and gave Himself for us?

Jesus deserves more than our admiration, and even our awe. He deserves to be followed in every aspect of our lives. He deserves to be praised, worshiped, and loved more than anyone else we know, famous or not.

The Lord told Moses the rules for Passover, a precursor to the True Lamb of God. We are also to follow the rules Jesus gave us, to love God and love our neighbor. And if we give Jesus His fair due, shouldn’t we also give our neighbor his and her fair due? Aren’t we all part of the same family? Aren’t we all Christ for one another?

The people of the native place of Jesus, His friends and neighbors as He was growing up, didn’t give Jesus His fair due. They didn’t recognize the necessity to give Jesus for His fair due for His wisdom and mighty deeds. He was common to them; He walked the same paths, prayed at the same synagogue, ate at the same meals as a youth. They took Him for granted. Do we take Jesus for granted?

St. John Vianney experienced a lot of challenges in his life leading up to his ministry as a priest. Before he was ordained, he saw the discrimination against priests, his studies were interrupted by the French Revolution. He was drafted into military service. He fell ill just two days into his service. He deserted and hid until amnesty was granted when he was finally able to enter seminary and ordained five years later.

He saw a lot of ignorance and indifference among the people of his parish. He preached against blasphemies and disobedience to the sanctity of Sundays. He spent most of his days in the confessional, struggling to reconcile his parishioners to God. He understood the necessity of faith and ongoing conversion.

We can learn a lot from St. John and from our own frequent indifference to not only those we love, but those who are near us and especially to our Lord and Savior Who comes to us, fervently, incessantly, lovingly. We have many opportunities to embrace the God of the universe Who wants to desperately to be with us. We have the opportunity right now to approach Jesus, receive Jesus, accept Jesus, not only as our Lord and Savior, but as our Brother, in love and in appreciation. May we strive to not take Jesus for granted, but to love Jesus, Who loves us perfectly, Jesus, Who is Love.