

Homily
Memorial of Saint Irenaeus, bishop and martyr
Friday of the 12th Week in OT
June 28, 2024

I like to think I'm a pretty smart guy. I went to college, got an advanced degree, studied at the Athenaeum, have read a lot of books. It's easy for me to forget that I don't know much, much more than I do know. Most of you know Msgr. William Cleves, Fr. Bill. I admire his ability to recall so much knowledge. I once said to him that it would be nice to know as much as he knows. He told me that would be easy – spend 16 years studying after college. That's 32 years of formal education. He has a PhD, has written several books, is fluent in many languages and can recall scripture without the aid of a lectionary. He's worked hard to know as much as he does. I'm not that interested in working as hard, so I will trust him when he instructs me.

St. Irenaeus was similarly smart. He wrote a number of books, but the most important that survives is *Against Heresies*. He fought against the Gnostics who emphasized personal knowledge above the teachings of the Church and other authorities. Irenaeus wrote: "One should not seek among others the truth that can be easily gotten from the Church. For in her, as in a rich treasury, the apostles have placed all that pertains to truth, so that everyone can drink this beverage of life. She is the door of life."

Jesus tells us that it is through Him that we can know the Father. It is through the Father's love that we know Jesus and know the Father. Jesus loves us more than we can know. It is by trusting in Jesus that we can know Him and learn to love Him, and through Him, love His Father and love one another. And it is through the Sacraments that Jesus has given us that we are made one with Him and one with each other. Jesus also said, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends." This Jesus did by His Passion and by His institution of the Eucharist, which we all have the opportunity to receive today.

Do we trust Jesus, or do we trust in ourselves? It takes great humility to admit we don't know it all. It takes great humility to come to Mass, open ourselves up to receive His Word proclaimed and receive His Body and Blood, accepting our frailty, accepting His wisdom and loving instruction. It is through obedience that we can enter fully into God's plan for us, to be one with Him and one with each other in His heavenly kingdom.