

Homily
14th Sunday in OT
July 7, 2024

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that the Eucharist is the “source and summit” of Christian life. It is fulfillment of God’s incarnation on earth. It is the very Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of our Lord, Jesus Christ. To say we don’t honor Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is just plain wrong. “Them’s fightin’ words,” as my dad would say.

But do we truly honor Jesus? Jesus is truly present in the Sacrament, in the tabernacle and on this altar at the words of consecration. But how else is Jesus present? Jesus comes to us in His Word proclaimed. Jesus speaks to us in the Gospel. Today, we hear that Jesus was rejected in His native place, by his family, friends and neighbors. They knew Him as a child growing up in the household of Mary and Joseph. They saw Him as the carpenter, probably serving them in this role as a common worker. They were familiar with Him, just as we are familiar with each other in this church, in our homes, around town, at restaurants and grocery stores.

Jesus is also present in many other ways all around us and in our lives. Jesus said, “I am with you always, until the end of the age.” Mt 28:20b

He is with us in our thoughts and prayers. Paul told the Thessalonians to, “pray without ceasing.” 1 Thes 5:17

Whether we are actively praying or focused on some task at hand, Jesus is with us, beside us, praying for us, loving us. When we are busy at work or play, Jesus is right there with us.

I know Jesus is with me, when I’m at work, when I’m praying with my wife, and especially when I’m golfing, laughing at my slices and hooks, my bunker and water shots, missing the cup by inches or passing the cup by miles.

And He is mostly with me when I am struggling, when I am tempted, when I am failing. He sees me when I fall and helps me get back up again. He is there cheering me on and praying for me to our heavenly, all-merciful Father. And He is there for you in the same way.

But Jesus is also with us in a very special way: Jesus is with us in each other. Just as Jesus is with you, He is with me, which makes us more than just neighbors, we are family. We can’t escape it: Jesus is in you and in me. When we interact with each other, we are also interacting with Jesus, because we are inseparable. Through Baptism and especially in the Eucharist, we become and are always one with Him and with each other.

We honor Jesus when we come to Mass. We honor Jesus when we receive the Eucharist, willingly and on purpose. We honor Jesus when we are dismissed and go into the world to be Christ for one another. And we honor Jesus most importantly when we recognize the presence of Jesus in all God’s creatures, even our family and friends, even when those very same family and friends embarrass us, frustrate us, insult us, hurt us.

We recognize and honor Jesus in all living creatures, here on earth and with our heavenly Father. It is God's greatest command, to love Him and each other as we love ourselves. In doing so, we treat ourselves and each other with dignity, the divine dignity we all are given by the Father. We serve ourselves and each other with respect, the same respect we are given by the Father. And we love ourselves and each other with the same love given us by our all-loving triune God.

Just imagine how much better the world would be if we all did that? Imagine how peace would reign on earth if we treated everyone with the same love, respect and honor. Imagine how much better our own lives would be if we started with ourselves. I can't wait for those who embarrass, frustrate, insult or hurt me to be the first. It all begins with me. It all begins with you. Remember that Jesus couldn't perform any mighty deeds because his family and friends took offense at Him. But He still was able to cure a few sick people. He knew that it all began with Him. And we only need to follow His example. And we only need to accept His love and encouragement, especially when we fail. He is always one with us, just as we are always one with each other. It all begins with me.