

JULY 25, 2021: 17TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME



When I saw my eye doctor a few years ago, he noticed that my eye sight, as far as seeing up close, had changed a bit. He said that it was possibly time to start using bifocals. The issue, of course, is that I primarily wear contacts. And, honestly, when I wear my glasses I only need to adjust them slightly forward and I can read with no problem at all. Obviously, I cannot do that with contacts. So, my doctor recommended that I try something called mono-vision instead of getting bifocal contacts, which are expensive; he would lessen the prescription in my left eye and leave the prescription in my right eye at normal strength.

What this would accomplish is that with my left eye I could read while with my right eye I could see distance, and I would not be able to tell the difference. However, he explained that this kind of adjustment does not work for everyone. For many people, it can cause them to feel dizzy and disoriented. I was fortunate that this did not happen to me. As soon as I put the contacts in they worked perfectly, and I did not need any time to adjust.

In many ways—as we look at life—we really see life almost like through two different prescriptions. We have the eye of our faith and the eye of the world—both trying to show us the world in very different ways. The Church is there to help us discern what is coming from Christ and what is coming from the world, but to fully understand the role of the Church in this discernment, we will need to focus on some underlying truths about Christ.

As we discussed last week, Jesus is different: He is not like any other teacher that has ever lived. Jesus cannot be compared to others in a way that makes what He teaches and what others teach equal in any way. Jesus is God Incarnate—the second person of the Holy Trinity. As such, what He taught us is truly in a different category from that of any other person who has ever lived. The most important truth we must realize is that Jesus did *not* come to automatically turn us into good people. In the human condition we are broken and are sinners, and we must recognize that truth. On our own we cannot fix this problem, but if it is *not* fixed we simply cannot get into heaven.

Jesus came for one reason and one reason only—to save us from sins. His whole life and existence on this planet was directed to our salvation. He did not come simply to teach us ethics or a moral way of life. He did not come to create a set of rules for us to follow and therefore become good. As Christians, we must recognize that only *One* is truly good and that *One* is God. The only way for *us* to be “good” is to understand and follow the will of God in our life. Anything that is contrary to God’s will, by definition, is evil and sinful. The only way to truly understand God’s will is through having a real relationship with Him. It is about recognizing that our entire life must be based on this relationship. It is the only way we can come to know truth and, as Catholics, we must understand and believe that truth is objective and unchangeable. For the truth is not a set of ideas: it is about a relationship with God and living our life centered in that relationship.

The only way to come into a real and full relationship with God is through Christ. And Jesus showed us the way to the Father by the way He lived his life. All that Christ did comes down to one statement, “Not my will but yours.” The most powerful reality of that is seen through the Paschal Mystery (Jesus’ passion/death, resurrection and ascension). The Paschal Mystery is both the means—and the only means—of our salvation and shows us the way to live out our salvation. We do not earn, merit, or deserve our salvation. It comes through what Christ did but, at the same time, we must live out the salvation He won for us. And we live out that salvation by living our lives in accord with how Christ lived his life.

In seeking to live our lives in accord with Christ, we come to embrace the Paschal Mystery. There, and there alone, we will discover our true relationship with God. As we grow in that relationship, we open ourselves more and more to God’s grace, which begins to transform our hearts and our lives. And it is there that we discover who we truly are. Apart from Christ it is impossible to truly know God, and apart from God it is impossible to truly know oneself. Because we are made in the image and likeness of God, it only makes sense that by truly coming to know God we will begin to know ourselves. In knowing ourselves, we recognize our need for God and complete dependence on Him for all things. The

radical truth of Christianity is only discovered through the path of humility and obedience, which Christ lived perfectly and calls us to do the same. This is the only path to salvation possible. The only way to see this path is through the prescription of faith. When we look through the eye of the world we get lost: we cannot see as we need to.

The whole mission of Christ then is to bring us to God through the Paschal Mystery—to see life as we should. The mission of Christ is to bring us into right relationship with God. Christ’s mission is about leading us into self-discovery, opening to us that need for God that leads us to grow in humility and obedience. Christ recognized the truth that we need help to discover the path of salvation. He recognized that we would need help in knowing which eye to use when looking at our lives. Therefore He gave us the gift of the Church to help us do just that. The mission of the Church is simply to continue the mission of Christ.

We will continue this discussion next week.

If you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to ask me directly, or send your questions to me at fr.brian@chelmsfordcatholic.org.

Please keep me in your prayers.

In Christ,

Fr. Brian

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brian". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "F" and "B".