

## Confirmation Enrollment/Catechetical Sunday

[Sirach 27:30-28:7; Psalm 103; Romans 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35]

Today's readings offer an uncomfortable, but clear challenge to us: the challenge of forgiveness. The first reading from the Book of Sirach reminds us to release or turn over to the Lord our anger and desire for vengeance, for it is God's role, not ours, to punish those who have done evil. We are not to be vengeful; we are to forgive. "The vengeful will suffer the Lord's vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail," Sirach writes. But as for us, we must forgive: "Forgive your neighbor's injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven."

It is important to remember, however, that forgiving another does not mean absolving them of responsibility. To forgive another is to confirm that they have done wrong and are in need of forgiveness. Mercy does not cancel out justice or the need for conversion, but it does open up a path of charity that encourages and promotes conversion and justice. For the Christian in the world, we live in mercy and we long for justice, but we entrust final justice (final conversion) always to God. As long as we believe in the power and mercy of God, we always hope for this.

I'm reminded of what a friend said to me recently: "I'm not in the revenge business. That's not in my job description. That's in God's job description!"

Another person told me, "I don't have the time and energy to invest in hate and resentment. It takes too much out of me."

Today, throughout the country, is Catechetical Sunday. Some catechists tell me that it's the hardest job in the world, like being thrown into the lion's den every week as a parish steward. Do you know what a parish volunteer is? One person describes it as someone who couldn't get away fast enough! Others describe it as a blessing, delving deeper and deeper into our relationship with Jesus and with the beauty that is the Catholic Church. The gift of teaching and preparing the future Church that will one day replace us all.

One catechist said, "Like most catechists, I plan careful lessons, spend far too much time creating original props I can't find in any catalog, and watch each week as plans to teach the heck out of some religious concept get derailed by factors beyond my control. I've finally determined the only good lesson plan boils down to One Big Idea. If I just say one thing across the hour -- write it, say it, make them repeat it, sing it, dance it -- with any grace it may stick, and students will learn it by heart.

This weekend we enroll our young people preparing for Confirmation. You who are candidates, this is a challenging time in your lives. Too old to be cute little kids and too young to be considered adults. And – Spoiler Alert – Confirmation doesn't make you an "adult" in the Church! If it did, you would be able to vote, drive a car, drink alcohol and join the military! Actually, Confirmation is your personal choice to be, to become and to live out the Catholic faith. With the divine help of the Holy Spirit.

I challenge everyone hearing my voice this day to discover two important things: who you really are, and what God wants you to be

when you grow up! Regardless of your age, we still are growing up! You are called to become a servant of the Lord. Our Second Reading says that when we live, we live for the Lord, and when we die, we die for the Lord. Find your place in the Church now!

Here is the One Big Thing I want to teach all of you today: Jesus Christ is truly present in the Most Blessed Sacrament, in His Most Holy Communion, in the Holy Eucharist most of us will be receiving soon. Jesus Christ is really here: Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. Jean-Paul Sartre, a world famous atheist and anti-Catholic philosopher of the twentieth century, is credited with saying this: “If you Catholic really believed that Jesus Christ is truly present in your Eucharist, you would be crawling on your hands and knees coming up the aisle to receive Him!” An atheist who knows about the Real Presence better than some of us Catholics do!

If some of us do truly do not believe that Jesus Christ is not present here, then we need to ask “Why?” The answers come from you! I asked some of you, and these are the observations you have made. What you see some people doing during Mass encourages our participation or is an obstacle to it. Our behavior in church. Do you help create a prayerful silence before Mass begins, or are you a distraction to others? Do you participate in the Mass or are you a passive observer?

Do you pay attention to the Readings and Homily, or are you reading the bulletin? Do you fast before receiving Communion or are you chewing gum? Most importantly, do you believe what we do here, or does it become “Hocus Pocus!”

Did you know where that expression comes from? It comes from the sacred words in Latin which the priest says over the bread during the Consecration of the Mass: “Hoc est enim corpus meum!” These sacred words have been turned into a blasphemous phrase.

Here is our response to any doubts and disrespect during Mass: Over the centuries, several Eucharistic Miracles have happened, even as recently as the 1990's. A priest doubts while saying the words of the Consecration, and the outer signs of the Eucharistic host change. Someone irreverently takes a Communion wafer home to hide, but later repents and brings it back to the church. Only it has transformed into human body and blood.

Upon official, scientific investigation – one of them ordered by our current Holy Father Pope Francis when he was the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, -- it was determined that a sample of bread had been miraculously transformed into human tissue. One of the cardiac doctors said, “This is tissue from the heart, it is not epidermis, that is, it is not a layer of human skin like an arm or a leg.” The sample is inflamed heart tissue of the myocardium. The cells are inflamed by physical stress. Could this physical stress have been caused when the Body of Jesus was hanging and crucified?

Examination of the Consecrated wine found human DNA in the samples: it is human blood that has a human genetic code – AB Positive. What we see, what we say and what we believe is true: It IS Jesus Christ present in the outer signs of bread and wine, but inwardly transformed into His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity!

Our nation-wide Eucharistic Revival is in its second of three years, leading up to a Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis July 17-21, 2024. 80,000 Catholics will convene for this historic event.

In this second year of the Revival, all parishes in the USA, which includes us at St. Martin de Porres Parish, will share in the preparation for the Congress.

This Wednesday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, from 1 to 3 PM for seven weeks, we will sponsor a “Eucharistic Study” in our parish center hall. The topics will include: What’s Our Story? Who is Jesus? Am I Saved? Why a Church? God With Us, The Story of the Eucharist, and Bread for the Journey. Sound appealing? Want to keep learning about your Catholic Faith? Come join us for one or for all sessions!

When you come up to receive Holy Communion today, remember that although it still looks like, tastes like and feels like a wafer, it is indeed the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ. The theme for this year’s Catechetical Sunday is, “Come to Me, All who are Weary and Burdened.” That would be all of us!

Listen to these words directed to you and me:

Jesus knows what you are going through.

Your days may be dark and nights may be stormy,

But Jesus knows and says to you, “Come to Me.”

He will not allow you to be tempted or disappointed beyond what you are able to bear. Then, come to Jesus!

His strength will preserve you.

His presence will bless you. His love will make you glad!

O Sacrament Most Holy, O Sacrament Divine, all praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine! (3x) AMEN!