

Bulletin Article #16 = The Homily – Part 2 (*In Persona Christi?...Yes!*)

A very important aspect of Catholic theology is the concept of *In Persona Christi*, which means *in the person of Christ*. This concept refers mainly to (but not exclusively in a sense) the Catholic Priest and what it means for a priest to be ordained and have their souls transformed and conformed to Jesus. This transformation of soul is what allows a priest to celebrate Mass, to hear confessions, to celebrate the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick and many other things as well. The point is that Catholics are not meant to *only see* the visible human person of the priest during these sacred actions, and in fact, we believe and understand that it is truly Jesus Himself working through the Catholic Priest during those moments. For example, when the priest says in Confession, "I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of....," the priest can't actually forgive sins simply from the power of his own humanity. In that moment, Jesus works through those words of the Priest and speaks to the penitent to actually and truly forgive their sins in that moment! The Catholic Priest is acting *In Persona Christi*, or *in the person of Christ*, in the sense of Jesus is the one using the priest as an instrument by cooperating with the priest's actions and working to speak HIS Word to the faithful people of God in those sacred moments. My point today in giving this reflection on *In Persona Christi* theology is that we also believe that the homily during each Mass is also one of those sacred moments!! Both the priest and the people should try their best to understand this and cooperate with this grace. Practically, this means the priest should do everything he can to be a holy instrument during his preparation for the homily and while giving the homily as well (thinking to himself, 'what does Jesus want to say to these people?,' for example). Also, the people of God should approach the words of the homily in this sacred way. Any single word, any phrase, any point or reflection or moment during the homily, might truly be Jesus speaking through the priest to you. Technically, even if you think the priest is a jerk or a hypocrite or whatever, Jesus could still speak through his imperfect words and speak HIS Word into your life at every single Mass you attend. This is very different from giving a talk, or a conversation, or a YouTube video. The homily is a sacred action, where Jesus is speaking through the priest *In Persona Christi*, so let's open our hearts to that reality, and continue to hear Jesus' Word spoken powerfully into our lives.