

Jesus Remains With Us
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Forty days after His Resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven. We celebrate this event every year on the Feast of the Ascension.

But before He ascended, Our Savior told His disciples that He would remain with His Church always, unto the ending of the age.

Jesus fulfills this promise in many ways, but the most amazing way in which He remains with His Church is in the Eucharist. We celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist at every Mass and receive it through Holy Communion.

God created us as creatures of both flesh and spirit, we have a natural life and a supernatural life. We need natural food to sustain our natural life and we need supernatural food to sustain our supernatural life.

When our first parents turned away from God, they created a barrier that disconnected them from sharing in God's divine life. Without God to sustain them, their supernatural life died. They were then put outside of the garden so that they would not eat also from the Tree of Life, and live forever in their fallen state.

The Tree of Life, mentioned in Genesis, is a foreshadowing of the cross. The cross of Christ is the true Tree of Life and Jesus is the fruit of that tree.

We regain our supernatural life through Baptism, but we sustain it by partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. When we receive Holy Communion we are brought into communion with God and are once again able to share in His divine life.

When the priest says the words of consecration over bread and wine, when he says “this is my body,” and “this is my blood,” we believe that the bread

and wine are miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Jesus. This is called Transubstantiation and is one of the beliefs that separate us from our protestant brothers and sisters.

It was during the Protestant reformation that many of these communities stopped believing in the real presence. Although they continue to have some form of “communion” in their Sunday worship, none of them believe that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist.

But Jesus meant exactly what He said. He is truly present in the Eucharist because He loves us too much to abandon us.

Thus, the Church has always taught, and the faithful have always believed, that in the Eucharist, under the appearances of bread and wine, our God is truly and sacramentally present in his body, blood, soul, and divinity.

This past week we heard new allegations directed against our clergy. The implications are truly horrifying. But it should come as no surprise that the Church is under attack. Hell is real and the Enemy, endowed with a brilliance beyond our own and armed with angelic abilities, hates us with a malice that is beyond our understanding. He wants nothing more than to separate us from God and kill off our supernatural life. To do this he has even infiltrated the hierarchy of God's Church.

But we have been here before. A few hundred years after the Resurrection, the Arian Heresy threatened to destroy the Church. The Arian Heresy basically denied that Christ was divine, co-equal with God. As it grew it splintered into several variations that denied sacred tradition, downplayed the value of the sacraments, dismissed the effectiveness of prayers to the saints and denied the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Arius, the author of this heresy, was a priest. He was also a gifted speaker and employed logic, reason, and a misinterpretation of scripture to argue his

case. He was so effective that St. Jerome estimated that at one time 4 out of 5 bishops, and 2 out of every 3 priests were guilty of, or complicit in, spreading this heresy. The majority of Catholics were led by men who did not uphold the teachings of the Church.

But the Church endured. It survived because God sent us men like St. Athanasius. Athanasius not only prayed for the salvation of the Church but he took action. Athanasius was the bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, for 46 years. He spent much of that time battling Arianism. For his trouble he was banned from his own diocese at least 5 times and spent a total of 17 years in exile, once under threat of assassination if he returned. He was censured, exiled, and hounded by a Church that was largely heretical.

Athanasius stood virtually alone against a Church the Enemy had succeeded in corrupting from within. He once said, "If the world goes against the Truth, then is it Athanasius against the world."

But slowly, he turned the tide. He ordained good, holy men to the priesthood and supported the papacy. Eventually the Council of Nicaea defined the teachings of the Church with the Nicene Creed, a creed we still use to profess our faith at every Mass.

This current crisis of the Church is much like the Arian Heresy in several ways. It is an attack that comes from within, it is internal rather than external. Instead of banishment, defenders of the Faith are ignored, instead of murdered, their characters are assassinated.

I know that many of you are saddened and disillusioned by what the Church is now going through. I have heard from many good priests and bishops that share your pain and agonize over the suffering of Mother Church. And it is cold comfort to stand her and remind you that Church has been through worse. The pain we feel is very real.

So what are we to do?

We can recall that the Church is bigger than any cardinal, or bishop, or priest, or deacon. The Church is even bigger than the pope. The Church does not belong to the clergy, nor does it belong to the laity, it belongs to God. For our part it is our responsibility to remain faithful to the eternal, unchanging teaching and sacred tradition of our Holy Catholic Church.

We are blessed at this parish to have Eucharistic adoration. The Eucharist is God's most meaningful gift to us. Through the incarnation of Jesus, God lowered Himself to our level, taking on our human nature. And then He raised our nature up to His level. Through the Eucharist, God nourishes us with His divine nature. The Eucharist is a sacrament of Christ's love for us.

In addition to daily and Sunday Mass, we can go into the chapel and sit with Our Lord, body, blood, soul and divinity, exposed in the Eucharist. Take your pain and suffering and offer it to Our Lord for the salvation of His Church. Pray in His presence.

Jesus told us He would be with us always. He will never leave us. He wants to be with us. Whenever we need Him we can find Him here, in our Chapel, the Gate of Heaven. Come to Him and He will give us strength, comfort, and guidance. Jesus is present in every city, in every town. In the Eucharist, He brings the light of Heaven into every corner of the earth.

Unite your prayers to the thousands of our brothers and sisters in monasteries and convents all over the world who pray day and night to keep the Enemy at bay. Pray to St. Athanasius to help us through his own prayers that we may be strong in our faith.

And then, like Saint Athanasius, do not be content to simply sit back and pray, take action.

God has given us all gifts and talents. God calls each one of us to a unique vocation. Attend to your vocation. Discover the purpose God has for you and focus on that. Live your vocation with true devotion and God will give you all the graces you need to be successful. If we do that, then we will play the role God has prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

Be wary, be on guard, watch out for the roaring lion that prowls about the world seeking the ruin of our souls. Be strengthened and nourished by the Eucharist, the True Body and Blood of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Be Brave. And be faithful.

Pax vobiscum

Reverend Mr. Lawrence Klimecki