

The Eucharistic filled life.

Homily for August 21 2021

In the middle of the 17th century there was a movement in the Church called Jansenism, named after a Dutch priest-theologian named Cornelius Jansen, who died in 1638. Jansenism taught it was not enough to be free from mortal sin to receive Holy Communion. The true Christian will have been so suffused by God's grace that the person will be completely free of sin. So, in order to be "worthy" of the Eucharist, a communicant had to be completely free of sin in order to receive. As Jansenism spread throughout the Church of Western Europe, the practice of abstaining from the Eucharist became commonplace; frequent reception of Holy Communion would not begin to be restored until the papacy of Pius X, over 200 years later.

Pope St Pius X was the 257th pontiff whose papacy was from August 1903 to August 1914. He was canonized in 1954. It is appropriate therefore that today's Gospel was read on his feast day. For here Jesus condemns a kind of Jansenism expressed by the Pharisees whose directives were so restrictive that it made the living of Judaism onerous.

Pius X recognized how soul destroying it was for the faithful to be without the Eucharist. He stated that "the Holy Eucharist is the shortest and safest way to heaven." When we are free to receive the Eucharistic Lord we discover that empowering presence of Jesus in our lives that allows us to grow in living like Ruth in our first reading. She was a woman of such integrity who lived a sacrificial love expressed primarily toward her mother-in-law Naomi. Boaz heard of her generous and gracious life, and in turn married her. From her marriage was born Obed, the grandfather of King David.

Ruth illustrates by her example what it means to live a Eucharistic filled life.

What we see in Ruth is the life of grace. And what is the life of grace? The life lived with Jesus at the centre. Ruth grace through hidden acts of kindness, something Jesus expected to see expressed in the leaders of Israel. When we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist we desire to be the kind of people who lift our fingers to help others with their burdens. We must, therefore, learn to be with others, to feel with them, to put ourselves in their shoes so that we can understand what their burdens feel like. Our hearts need to feel real empathy. We are Pharisees when we look upon others' sins or lack of faith and judge them, like the Jansenists. We are Christs for others when we put judgment of others aside, pray for them, listen to them, accompany them, and strive to lift their burdens.

People who do works to be seen are pharisaical. When we strive to impress those around us or, worse yet, prove that we are better than they are, we are enslaved by sin. By contrast, when we are able to serve another person in a hidden way, it keeps our love for God something truly personal and intimate—just between God and us. As this intimacy with Christ fills our hearts, he can free us from the desire to be seen by others.

How many opportunities we have each day to be the least, and the servant of others. Day after day we may find ourselves disgruntled because of a terse discussion, because someone doesn't

respect our opinion, or because they think they know more than we do. We feel belittled in some way. The injustice can hurt, but Christ invites us to offer these moments as a fragrant gift to him, which will strengthen us to be humble servants to others.

As we learn to live this way we will more fully realize the Eucharist is the shortest way to heaven because we like Ruth are being conformed by Grace to bring heaven to earth by living with genuine care and kindness towards others each day.