

Homily for 13th Sunday of Ordinary Time
June 30th, 2019

The David Within

Last Sunday Fr Troy gave a moving and thoughtful homily on the Body and Blood of Christ. Since posted on June 23 it has been viewed more than 6000 times. There has never been a homily preached at St. Peter's that has been viewed this often. No wonder..... It was the heartfelt and thoughtful words of this young man who has inspired and called us to a deepening relationship with Jesus and His Church, since coming among us two years ago. Last Sunday was quintessential Fr Troy preaching where he witnessed to the beauty of Corpus Christi.

We look forward to what God will continue to do in one who is like Elisha in today's first reading. Having taken 16 years to discern this vocation to the priesthood, like Elisha he has offered up his Oxen, so as to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. For Fr Troy they weren't yoked animals, but the vocation to marriage and to teaching in a Catholic School. And just as Elisha came to share in the prophetic mantle of Elijah, the cloak of his prophetic office, on Friday evening when Fr Troy was vested in the Diocesan Chasuble, he is now privileged to share in this office as a priest of Jesus Christ. Because of the way he now dresses when at the Altar, he is here, as am I, and every other priest, not representing ourselves but Jesus Christ. There is a continuity to how Catholic Priests are attired with the priests of the Aaronic lineage. That is the Old Testament priests. As they participated in the Temple Sacrifice, dressing very similarly to us, we share in that Sacrifice that superseded the Temple, the once and for all offering on Calvary.

When at the Altar the priest represents Jesus by presenting Jesus to you in the Eucharist. This is for us of such importance because as Fr Troy said last Sunday:

God will radically abandon himself to come down in the form of bread and wine, veiled by the appearances of bread and wine. This grace to receive God is not reserved for me alone. God desires to move from my hands, the hand of the priest into your heart. What a magnificent mystery that Jesus is here, present in the Body and Blood of the Eucharist.

There is a direct correlation to the priest's understanding of who he is presenting on the Altar so that when we move from the Eucharist to the work of pastoral care we are deeply aware of a second magnificent mystery. That you beloved family of Christ who share with us in this sacred meal, are yourselves the Body of Christ.

Back in 1501 the great sculptor, Michelangelo did something remarkable. No one wanted the "giant." The hulking block of marble lay in the work yard, rained on, hacked at, and abandoned for over 100 years. —until a young Michelangelo, age 26, saw his David in it. Early in the morning on September 13, 1501, the young artist got to work on the slab, extracting the figure of David in a miraculous process that the artist and writer Giorgio Vasari would later describe as "the bringing back to life of one who was dead."

Night and day, Michelangelo worked in secret, lovingly coaxing the statue out of the stone, finishing it in just over two years. Of his David he said:

“The sculpture is already complete within the marble block, before I start my work. It is already there, I just have to chisel away the superfluous material.”

Now I want to suggest to you that the work of pastoral care is like this. As priests give you Jesus in the Eucharist, priests are to help you discover how to chisel away at the superfluous material so that the person potentially there in the marble block can be freed. When together we are discovering the David within, we realize that together we are the Body of Christ, something that can be hard to recognize when we feel more like a hulking block of abandoned marble.

To have a sculptor’s vision priests need to cultivate three attributes:

- Perspective
- Patience
- Perseverance.

Perspective is a point view, a way we look at the world. When for instance I am atop Tunnel Mountain in Banff I have a perspective on the town site I will not have if walking down Banff Avenue. A priest wants to cultivate a perspective where he is able to see that every one of us needs to be liberated from the block of marble. That is because living in this world weighs us all down, what St. Paul called living according to the works of the flesh. How imprisoned we are when the flesh governs how we live. Listen to how Paul states it:

If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Not only can we by our words and actions devour others with sarcasm, a tirade of anger, gossip and slander, we can also devour ourselves by a self-hatred or inability to accept the life that is mine. Consequently our self-talk diminishes our inherent dignity. Priests need to have the perspective to see this in others and also in ourselves.

We then want to also cultivate the patience to help the body of Christ entrusted to our care to discover that love is the sculptor’s chisel that can bring to life the masterpiece wanting to be freed. Listen to how Paul states this:

but through love become slaves to one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”¹

Priests are in a special way to embody the patience that lovingly works to shape the community into a fellowship of slaves to love. Such a love has been embodied in the care you have shown in marking the celebrations of this weekend, from those who gathered to prepare the flowers, to the hours of loving care that went into the reception on Friday evening at St. Mary’s Hall, to the

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Ga 5:13–14). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.

Reception yesterday after Fr Troy's first Mass, to the BBQ following today's 11:30 AM. Mass. It is as we learn to discover caringly and patiently what it is to be the body of Christ that in turn we can persevere in realizing that the master sculptor is in the end, Jesus Christ. The name "Elisha" means "my God saves". The priest is confident that Jesus is the one who does save and we want to help draw people to him more and more.

See how this is at work in today's Gospel. As they are going through Samaritan territory, James and John want to call down fire on the Samaritans. This is because there was an age old animosity between the Jews and Samaritans exacerbated during Jesus' time by Samaritans killing Jews who journeyed through their territory on the way to Jerusalem. This would have been fresh in the minds of the Apostles and so understandably but wrongheadedly they wanted to let those Samaritans have it.

But recall what Jesus does, he rebukes them for their desire to exact revenge and then we hear of people who want to follow Jesus but are attached to lodging, paying respect for one's dead father and requesting to bid farewell to family before following Jesus. What Luke is doing by bringing these stories together is to help us have the perspective to see that of all the things important to us, like lodging, a family funeral and saying goodbye, that if these good things take precedence over Jesus then we will not be able to give ourselves fully into the artist's hands. The priest is that person who lovingly and perseveringly is inviting people to put Jesus first and all the other goods things in life in relation to him. At the same time he is the person who listens attentively to the stories of resentment that can lead to an anger that is incapable of seeing the David in the other, and wants to incinerate the marble here and now!

Such a perspective, patience and perseverance is expressed in today's Collect as the Church prays:

*O God,
who through the grace of adoption
chose us to be children of light,
grant, we pray, that we may not be wrapped
in the darkness of error but always be seen
to stand in the bright light of truth.*

The Body of Christ is the family of adoption. This is why you address priests as Father, because we have are to have pastoral care to help you discover what it is to be children of the light as Jesus frees you from the confines of the darkness of error that as to free the David within. That David who can stand in the bright light of truth.