

*Third Sunday of Easter*  
*Mother's Day*  
*Homily ~ May 8, 2011*

*Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski*  
*St. John the Evangelist Parish*  
*Davison, Michigan*

A teacher asked this question: "Suppose your mother baked a pie and there were seven of you—your parents and five children. What part of the pie would you get?"

"A sixth," replied one boy.

"I'm afraid you don't know your fractions," said the teacher. "Remember, there are seven of you."

"Yes, Teacher," said the boy. "But you don't know my mother. Mother would say she didn't want any pie."

Let us reflect for a moment on all the things mothers do for us. First, they bring us into the world through a biological miracle that is truly amazing, but certainly not easy. Then they spend the next two decades preparing meals, solving problems, kissing boo-boos, helping us learn everything from how to brush our teeth to how to navigate the difficulties of the real world. They spend the rest of their lives fretting and worrying about us. They care for us in a way that is beyond words. They sacrifice for us in ways beyond words. Even after they have passed on, their influence is so powerful that it stays with us always.

Happy Mother's Day, Mom. We give thanks to God for each of you!

One day is nice, but not enough. I invite you to make a commitment to honor these women every day of the year because one day is not enough!

Speaking of a special day...once upon a time there was a king who decided to set aside a special day to honor his greatest subject. When the big day arrived, there was a big gathering in the palace courtyard. Four finalists were brought forward and from these four the king would select the winner.

The first person presented was a wealthy philanthropist. The king was told that this man was deserving of the honor because of his humanitarian efforts. He had given much of his wealth to the poor.

The second person was a cherished physician. The king was told that this doctor was highly deserving of the honor because he had rendered dedicated service to the sick for many years.

The third person was a distinguished judge. The king was told that the judge was worthy because he was noted for his wisdom, his fairness, and his brilliant decisions.

The fourth person presented was an elderly woman. Everyone was quite surprised to see her there because her manner was quite humble, as was her dress. She hardly looked the part of someone who would be honored as the greatest subject in the kingdom. Even so, there was something about her—the look of love in her face, the understanding in her eyes, her quiet confidence.

The king was quite intrigued and somewhat puzzled by her presence. He asked who she was. The answer came. You see the philanthropist, the doctor, and the judge? Well, she was their teacher. The woman had no wealth, no fortune, no title, but she had unselfishly given her life to producing great people. There is nothing more powerful or more Christ-like than sacrificial love.

The king could not see the value in the humble lady. He missed the significance of who she was.

Often we miss the value of those around us. I think it would surprise us to know how often we miss the presence of Christ, just as Cleopas and his companion missed the significance of the stranger on the road to Emmaus.

Can it happen to us? Can we miss the presence of Christ right before our very eyes?

Let's recall how the two on the road to Emmaus meet Jesus. The first was through the breaking of the bread in the Word. We heard them say, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he spoke to us on the road, as he explained the Scriptures to us?"

Friends, there is no mistake. God is present to us through his Word. It is a shame that many of us have let our daily encounter with the Word slide. Those who make daily reading of the Word a part of their lives find themselves drawn closer to the Master.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn demonstrated the power of the Word in his book *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, a book based on his own prison experiences. Ivan notices that one of his fellow prisoners in the gulag archipelago is not broken and the light in his eyes does not go out, as it seems to in all the other

convicts. That is because each night in his bunk before the glimmering bulb is turned off, the man reverently unfolds some wrinkled pieces of paper that have somehow escaped the guards. On them are copied passages from the Gospels. The Book of Life was the secret of this man's strength and endurance in the darkest corner behind the Iron Curtain. This is one way we encounter Christ in the breaking open of his Word.

The other place we encounter Christ is in the breaking of the Bread, in coming to union, literally, with the body and blood of Christ. It is significant that it was when Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and broke it that the disciples knew who he was! Their eyes were opened; their hearts were burning inside them. How privileged it is today as Ariana, Alesiah and Owen celebrate their First Holy Communion.


This came through so powerfully at the Easter Vigil when after many days, weeks, and months, our new members received Holy Communion for the first time.

Similarly, when a person who has not received the Sacraments returns to Communion, there are no words to describe the deep feeling within their very being! Should not our hearts be burning inside us as we hear those words:

*"This is my body which will be given up for you.*

*This is my blood which will be shed for you."*

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