

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Year B: Ex 16:2-4, 12-15; Ps 78; Eph 4:17, 20-24; Jn 6:24-35
August 1, 2021
Fr. David Pignato

There have been some very good discussions lately, both here in the diocese and in the Church at large, about how to help the Church continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic. Here at St. Julie's, many people have returned to Mass, but this is not true everywhere. In many places, far fewer people now practice the faith, compared to before the pandemic. Here at St. Julie's, we have the ongoing challenge of getting our young people in the faith formation program and their families to practice the faith, and this needs to be a priority for all of us in the parish.

Discussions about the future of the Church sometimes refer to different programs that might be tried in each parish. But Bishop da Cunha is convinced that our main focus as a diocese needs to be on the Eucharist, which is the greatest treasure and possession of the Catholic Church. The Eucharist is Jesus Himself, which means it is the Real Presence of God with us here on earth. So, there could never be anything more important or more worthy of our attention and focus than Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

Twenty years ago, at the beginning of the Third Millennium, Pope St. John Paul II reminded the Church that the best program we could ever use to keep the Church alive and well is a strong focus on Christ Himself. As the Church completed the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, Pope John Paul II said, “[W]e ask ourselves today the same question put to Peter in Jerusalem immediately after his Pentecost speech: ‘What must we do?’ (*Acts 2:37*).” He said, “We put the question with trusting optimism, but without underestimating the problems we face. We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person [Jesus Christ], and the assurance which he gives us: *I am with you [always, to the close of the age (Mt 28:20)]*” (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001), n. 29).

“It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new programme,’” the Pope said. “The programme already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and

cultures [It is a] programme for all times [and it] is our programme for the Third Millennium” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 29).

So, the goal and the focus of the Church in every age, no matter what challenges she faces (including a pandemic), is to love and imitate Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race. That’s why we are trying to promote and encourage Adoration of the Eucharist here at St. Julie’s. Adoration gives us the peaceful and prayerful opportunity to focus our souls on Christ and to consider how His teachings apply to our lives. And when we do that, our souls are converted more and more to Christ, and conversion is always the pastoral goal of every Catholic parish.

In his direction for the Third Millennium, Pope St. John Paul II said, “I have no hesitation in saying that all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to *holiness*.” He said, “[I]t would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity.” “The time has come,” he said, “to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this *high standard of ordinary Christian living* ... and call for a genuine ‘*training in holiness*’” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 30). “Christ,” he said, “must be presented to all people with confidence ... [and] without ever hiding the most radical demands of the Gospel message” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 40).

And this, again, is why we promote Adoration here at St. Julie’s. It’s in our time of quiet prayer in the Presence of the Lord that we present before Him the truth about our lives, including whatever still needs to be converted to Him, whatever still needs to be purified and sanctified. It’s in the Presence of the Lord that we are most challenged to be truthful about our lives. And it also happens that when we focus on and adore Christ in the Eucharist, He inspires us to turn our souls to others in need. When we focus on Christ and give Him our attention, He can prompt in us good resolutions about how to help others. When we focus on Christ, He shows us how to put our faith in Him into action by showing greater love for others, especially those in most need.

So, Jesus Christ is always the program and the goal for the Church. We can never go wrong by focusing on Christ. And He is always here with us in the Blessed Sacrament. As we just heard Christ say in the Gospel, “[T]he bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ... I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst” (Jn 6:33, 35). May all of us here at St. Julie’s deepen our faith and love for Christ in the Holy Eucharist, so that we will grow in conversion and holiness, and then deepen our love for others, especially those most in need.