

A look in the mirror

Most of us, as Catholics, believe that in the celebration of the Eucharist, bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. That's a miracle we can't understand or explain, but accept as a matter of faith. The far more challenging aspect is to believe that, in receiving this body and blood we become the presence of Christ. Yet, that is precisely what Jesus taught us.

During the summer, for about six weeks, each Sunday we read from the "Bread of Life" discourse from John's Gospel. Again and again, Jesus said in these or similar words, "My flesh is real food. My blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him."

That's why I found the passage from the fifth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians so powerful. I had read that passage dozens of times in my life, but never really heard what he was saying. Let me just quote a few verses. Paul writes: "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts. ... " Note that Paul isn't talking about singing psalms in church. He's telling us to praise God in each other, to sing to God in each other, to glorify the Lord living in our hearts!

We become the presence of God in two ways. First, we let go of what is not of God in our lives. Second, we feed on God.

I recall a story of a little Indian boy asking his grandfather about the meaning of life. The Indian chief replied, "There are two wolves inside each of us that fight to dominate our lives. One is a good wolf, and the other is an evil wolf. The evil wolf is mean, blaming, angry and unforgiving. The good wolf is kind, loving, gentle and forgiving. They battle it out to see which will run our lives."

The little grandson paused, and then asked, "Which wolf wins?" His grandfather replied, "The one you feed!" If we feed meanness, blaming, anger and unforgiveness, that wolf will run our lives. If we feed on kindness, love, gentleness and forgiveness, that wolf will run our lives.

We will know that the good wolf is winning, that Jesus is running our lives, when we

do what Jesus did – be kind, loving, gentle and forgiving.

Until you and I really believe that Jesus lives in us, nothing will change in our lives. So, a little exercise that I suggest we practice for the rest of our lives is this. Every time you look into a mirror say, “I love you Jesus.” Every time you look into a mirror to shave, to comb your hair, to put on make-up, to check how good you look, whatever, simply say, “I love you Jesus.”

Most of the time, you won’t believe that you’re looking at the presence of God. Most of the time, I have a hard time believing too. Our conditioned minds have a hard time believing that Jesus lives in us. Our world says to us, what the crowd said to Jesus in John’s Gospel: “How can he give us his flesh to eat?”

But if we can get past our own mental resistance, and get past the skepticism of the world, and, instead, trust Jesus, then we will see God when we look into that mirror. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.” Note, Jesus didn’t say he visits. He said he remains.

So just try a day at a time to get in the habit of saying “I love you Jesus” every time you look into the mirror. When you and I can consistently see Jesus living in us, our lives will change forever.

Bread and wine becoming the body and blood of Jesus is wonderful. You and I becoming the body and blood of Christ is equally wonderful. Jesus said it was so. All we have to do is to believe it.