

## WE ARE A PART, NOT APART



Many of us prefer to be with the people we like. Naturally, we choose to stay where we are accepted. Some even enjoy being the center of attention.

Jesus, however, is not like us. Jesus and his disciples had spent the day in Capernaum where “he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons.”

“Rising very early before dawn, Jesus left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, ‘Everyone is looking for you.’ He told them, ‘Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.’”

Everyone in Capernaum seemed to like Jesus. He was popular. Yes, he was popular because of the deeds he performed for the people, but still, he was popular. Why would he leave? Why would he move on to a place where his acceptance was not yet settled?

Because Jesus preached being in community, with all its mess and dysfunction.

Catholicism is a social religion. We are called to be Christians together. We are a part, not apart. Therefore Sunday Mass, our primary form of worship, is public and communal.

This begins with loving your neighbor as you love God – because Christ is within each person. We know from the parable of the Good Samaritan that everyone is our neighbor. Not simply the people you like or who like you. Everyone! Therefore, as Christians we are called to be in community with EVERYONE. Not just those who we like and who like us.

The Eucharist, for example, draws each of us closer to Christ as individuals, but also as a community. At the Eucharistic liturgy, we gather with the young and old, the rich and poor, as well as millions around the world and the saints in heaven, to celebrate Christ’s sacrifice.

As Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict wrote “[I]n my prayer at communion, I must look totally toward Christ. ... I must always keep clearly in mind that in this way he unites me organically with every other person receiving him – with the one next to me, whom I may not like very much; but also with those who are far away, in Asia, Africa, America or in any other place.” *Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity*

This call to be in community with all its harmony and discordant notes extends beyond the Eucharist and beyond the parish we choose; it includes those we associate with. Do we gravitate towards those who believe like we do or does our world include those who differ from us – in color, values and politics?

To be Catholic, we cannot be apart. To be a part of the Catholic community we participate in building a culture of inclusion. This allows us not only to embrace those who are not like us, but also to intentionally seek out those next to us in the pews and those far away in body and spirit.

To be a part of the Catholic community we have Jesus’ example: to leave where he is liked in order to place himself where he was not yet accepted (and may not be). As Catholics we are called to be communal and to participate in a community with all our neighbors who we “may not like very much.”

(Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time)



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