

**Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
**May 19, 2019**  
**Homily for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass**  
**of**  
**St. Thomas More Catholic Parish**  
**celebrated at**  
**St. Joseph Catholic Church**  
**116 Theodore St.**  
**Scranton, PA 18508**  
**John 13: 31-33a, 34-35**

What a perfect lesson we have been given today for our celebration of First Holy Communion! Jesus tells us in the Gospel that we are to love one another as He loves us, and that people will know we are His disciples when we love one another. This is a perfect passage from Scripture today because another name for Holy Communion is the Sacrament of Love.

The Sacrament of Love: What does the Church mean by calling Holy Communion the Sacrament of Love? We've actually talked a lot about this in class, how Jesus gives to us His own Body and Blood, in order to give us His very life. This is love: when we give ourselves away, so that others may live. So every time we receive Holy Communion, we receive Him who gave Himself away; we receive Him who loves us so much that we call Him the Sacrament of Love.

So He gives us His life in order that we may live, live with Him forever in heaven, because He loves us so much that He wants to be with us for all eternity. But Jesus also gives us Himself so that we can love people the same way that He did. Just as He gives Himself away, He wants us to give ourselves away. He gives us Himself so that we become like Him, and in becoming like Him we begin to act like He did.

He is generous; so when we receive him, we become generous. He is compassionate; so when we receive Him, we become compassionate. He is Love; so when we receive Him, we become loving. This is called divinization, becoming like God; and it's possible because of the sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Love that we are able to receive every day and thus become more and more like our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So how do we love people? How do we love people, strengthened by the Sacrament of Love, the way that Jesus did? Of course, we have the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, which teach us loving things we can do, like feed the hungry and counsel those who are in doubt. And all of these works are good ways to love people, but I'm going to share a story with you about a very special person, who taught me how to love people.

Some of you know that my dad died on Thursday, and that his funeral will be this Saturday. Well, I hope you can all come and, if not, that you will all pray for the repose of his soul. While he was alive, for as long as I can remember, he had a sort of open-door policy at his house. Anybody who wanted to come over could. You see, his own father had worked several jobs simultaneously when he was growing up; and whenever he was home, he was sleeping so that he had energy to get up and work again. So when my dad was growing up, he could never have guests over, because guests make noise. They talk, they eat, they laugh, and sometimes, if they're sad, they even cry and wail. Since my dad couldn't have guests when he was a boy, he was determined to have guests as a man. He received everybody and talked to everybody. The Bergman house in Bethlehem was a very loud house, because everybody was welcome; and they came in droves.

In fact, my friends would visit my house when I wasn't even there. They knew I was in Virginia or London or Connecticut, and they'd come to see my father. So on the day Dad died, I got a call from one of those friends, and he told me, "I never told this to your dad, but whenever I needed to feel loved, I would go to your house. And your father always made me feel at home. I always felt love when I was at 605."

That phone call got me thinking about Eucharistic miracles, those times when the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist don't have the accidents of Bread and Wine, but of human flesh and human blood. It's happened so many times down through the ages that I don't actually have a count for you; but you don't have to go far to find a time when this happened, a chalice full of blood, or a piece of Jesus' heart upon the altar. So when these miracles happen, the scientists test the blood to see that it's real, that it's actually from a man; and what they have learned is that Jesus in the Holy Eucharist always has the same blood type. You might think that Jesus' blood type is the universal donor, since He gives Himself away and He wants everybody to be able to receive Him. But no, Jesus' blood type is not the universal donor, but the universal recipient. Jesus receives everybody, and He wants us to do the same.

Therefore, if we want to love like Jesus loves, we have to have an open-door policy, too. To be like Jesus, to become like God, is to receive everybody. You thought your house was a retreat from the world? Those places are called monasteries, and God in His providence has put such places all over the world for when we need rest and refreshment. Catholic houses are those others retreat to. Just as we receive Jesus in Holy Communion and welcome Him into our hearts, so we are to receive the least of these our brethren, in whom we should see the face of Jesus Christ. The first way we give ourselves away is by receiving all comers, by treating lovingly all those God sends our way. It sounds hard, perhaps even impossible. But I've seen it done, and Jesus, the universal recipient, through the Sacrament of love, will give us the strength to do this, as well.