

10th Sunday- A 2008 (Deacon Pat Hall)

Homilies are aids to encountering the living Word.

First, please read the scripture passages that inform this homily:

Hosea 6:3-6; Psalm 50:1, 8, 12-13, 14-15; Romans 4:18-25; Matthew 9:9-13

These readings can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/nab/readings/060808.shtml>

Hosea says, "It is love I desire, not sacrifice...knowledge of God, not holocausts."

Christ in the Gospel of Matthew says, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."

You see it's all about relationship, with God and with God in each other.

When we come to Mass, when we come to satisfy our Sunday obligation,
it *is* the right thing to do.

God appreciates it when we honor his commands.

But is he satisfied?

Who he really wants is *you*.

He wants you to be in a loving relationship with Him.

That is what he offered Matthew, the tax collector.

He called Matthew to share his path: "Follow me."

Jesus offered to sinners nothing less than a relationship with the divine.

Fulfilling our Sabbath obligations don't make us good,
just as we heard God saying that sacrifice and holocausts are not desired,
but love is, knowledge of God is, faith is and mercy is.

The danger about the Final Judgment isn't so much about the question of whether or not
you were good enough during your lifetime.

The questions may be, "Who are you? Do I know you? Do you know me?"

So how can we know God?

He told us where to find him.

We can find him in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the ill and the imprisoned (Mt
25:31).

Have you sought a relationship with them? Jesus is there.

He also told us: "I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never hunger, and
whoever believes in me will never thirst (Jn 6:34).

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him (Jn 6:56)."

When we come to communion, it isn't the satisfying of our obligations that gets us closer
to heaven,

it is because we follow Jesus into a deeper relationship.

Jesus remains in you and you remain in him.

What can be more intimate than that?

As rational creatures, we have some logical barriers.

Abraham had the same barriers.

Abraham was almost 100 and impotent.

His wife, Sarah, was old and infertile.

It was in faith that he embraced God's promise of becoming the father of many nations.

Today, Christians, Jews and Muslims all claim Abraham as our spiritual father.

He chose to follow God in faith that was truer than all reason.

When I see the homeless and the poor, it is often an ugly situation.

They might not be acting very sweetly like we would expect of Jesus.

So how can I see Jesus in whom society deems as despicable?

When I receive communion, it chews like bread and tastes like wine.

How is that the body and blood of Christ?

I can jump through all kinds of philosophical gymnastics and poetic metaphors, but Jesus was not being poetic or philosophical, he was talking about his real presence, real relationship.

I can't *make* myself believe. I can't *do it* on my own.

I can see the color blue and call it red as long as I want.

I can even *wish* to call it *really* red, but my brain knows otherwise.

The only way that I can believe in Jesus' real presence in the poor and in the Eucharist is to receive the grace of faith.

The faith that Jesus is asking *from* you is really the gift of faith that he is offering *to* you.

That is the grace that is pure gift.

You can't be good enough to take it.

Taking is the original sin from the Garden of Eden.

Free gift is what is received from Calvary.

Would you like an intimate relationship with God, a relationship that fulfills you now and continues onto perfection in eternity?

You can pray for that grace.

For me it is sometimes *hard* to pray for that grace.

I sometimes have to pray for the grace that would allow me to pray for the grace of faith.

Often my prayer is like the father of the possessed boy, "I do believe, help my unbelief!"

(Mk 9:24)

Jesus does respond.

Relationships can be wonderful, but sometimes they can wane.

I reminisce about my boyhood buddy, Stan. We were inseparable.

I remember battling with him with tree limbs while trying to maintain balance on a plank bridge that crossed our backyard stream, you know, like Robin Hood and Little John.

I went through some near-death experiences with him as he battled complications from his chronic asthma.

I remember one time when he was feeling the full effects of his meds, he scaled up onto a cross beam 20 ft in the air at a construction site and was doing an Olympic balance beam imitation.

I went up there shinnying myself along the I-beam, gripped with fear saying, "C'mon, Stan, this isn't funny, c'mon down!"

I think our guardian angels put in for hazard pay that day.

We shared high school experiences, dating girls and all the things that went into being great buds.

But as life paths are wont to do, we drifted apart after college.
Although I remember him fondly, there really hasn't been much shared since.

Sometimes our relationship with God mirrors the relationship I had with Stan.
There was once something great happening, but then there was no continued sharing that would sustain a growing relationship.

When we look at our relationship with Jesus, is it based on reminiscing?
Are you sharing your life with Jesus now?
He wants nothing more than to share his.

Where can we find Jesus?
He told us.
Pray for the grace, the gift of faith.

Jesus calls, "Follow me".