

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Last Sunday I began my homily noting the very special community that exists at St. Pius. I said it last Sunday, and I will say it again, there is no obstacle, no trail, and no adversity that the St. Pius community cannot overcome. Such proved to be true over this past year and will continue to prove true long into the future. Rejoice and be glad in the many blessings the Lord continues to pour out in this community! We need not be afraid over the current sociopolitical climate within this nation, we need not be distracted by the many and various voices that echo throughout the streets and into our homes, and we need not worry about the future that is to come, for Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever!

Over the past several weeks Our Lord has been incredibly direct with us through the Sunday Gospel readings. We have been privileged to stand in the place of the disciples as Jesus instructs them and encourages them on the mission they are called to fulfill in Jesus Christ. Like the disciples, we can often fall into self-doubt, regret, and despair when contemplating the sum total that is the Gospel message - we must not be discouraged! The Gospel, the Good News, is not of our own making, inspiration, or from our own authority. The Gospel is Jesus Christ. He alone is the way, the truth, and the life! He alone possesses the authority, the power, and the strength to bring salvation to all who seek Him. Whatever may be the actions we ought to commit or the words we ought to speak is fully and completely under the control of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who will show us how to act and teach us how to speak. All that the Lord desires from us is our total, full, and complete 'yes' for Him. For this reason, the main instruction Jesus offers to his disciples, and to us, is to choose Him above all else.

This particular and direct choice for Christ, and Christ alone, can be quite destabilizing and jarring at first. We may often think the Lord to be harsh, cruel, or lacking in empathy. We may think, if God is love why does he want me not to love my father, mother, sister, or brother? Is this not the Christian way, to love our neighbor as ourselves? Without question, God's command is to love, but love is not something that we can just do. We have to learn how to love. We learn how to love by first being loved by others, which sets us on the path of love that ends in God alone. In this way, though we first know love by those who love us we cannot reach the heights of love without being totally, fully, and completely committed to God whom is the source of love and who directs love to its proper end in Him. Only in struggling and striving to love God with everything that we are can we begin to love others as Christ has loved us. The way Christ has loved us is the cross. On the cross we see a total, full, and complete 'yes' to God the Father; resulting in a self-emptying love, where in giving His life we receive life in Jesus Christ.

How do we begin to choose God alone? How do we begin to imitate the self-emptying of Christ? Begin by choosing the Eucharist. Begin by developing, in communion with the Holy Spirit, a real and direct Eucharistic spirituality, which professes the Eucharist to really be the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ. It is in the Eucharist where we witness the re-presentation of Calvary so to behold the God-Man, Jesus Christ, whom is wounded to the point of death so that we may be restored to everlasting life! The Eucharist is the school of love where in receiving Jesus Christ we slowly become what we receive - we become love! A love not of this world. A love not rooted solely in emotions, but rather a love rooted in the depths of our souls where our intellect, will, and conscience come to find their unifying end in God, who is love.

Have courage and be not afraid! Seek, strive, and struggle to choose Jesus Christ by uniting yourselves totally, fully, and completely to the Eucharist and then allow God to do the rest; resulting in God properly ordering all things to Himself, thus drawing all things into completeness - or in another word, perfection. Never have the words of St. Padre Pio been more necessary than today; pray, hope, and don't worry!

Live Christ, Fr. Kyle