

HOMILY 21ST Sunday Ordinary Time
August 24, 2025

If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Interesting question. In the Gospel reading today Jesus tells us a parable. A parable is a story that Jesus tells to make a spiritual or moral point. In the story, after someone has locked the door, and there are people outside knocking on the door saying “Lord, open the door for us.” The person inside answers “I do not know you.” And the person outside answers “We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets.” That is not much contact, is it? It is like saying “Last fall we were at the same fundraiser dinner. We did not talk to you but we were all there together and we have seen a few of your posts on Instagram.” How would you respond? “Oh ya, come on into my house in the middle of the night.” Or would you be more likely to say “Go away, I do not know you”. Now God knows every one of us. He knows the number of hairs on your head or the number of hairs not on your head. But do we know Jesus? Do we recognize him when he comes into our lives? To recognize Jesus in our lives, we have to get to know him. Getting to know Jesus is a lot like getting to know other people. We need to learn about them and interact with them. It is hard to follow someone you really do not know. If you need to choose from a variety of options, it is difficult to choose Jesus if you do not recognize him.

You probably will not visually see Jesus or literally hear his voice in this world, but he is with us all the time, we are just not always aware of his presence. Jesus is present to us in many ways, but today, I want to talk about how Jesus is present to us at Mass

and how we can get to know him better. One way is in the readings from the Bible. Every weekend we hear three readings, the first, second, psalm response that is sung, and the Gospel. We follow a three year cycle, year A, B, and C. We are in year C now. Every three years you pretty much hear all of the Gospels. I think we come to know Jesus very well through the Gospels. When we hear the Gospel the first time at Mass, it is difficult to comprehend the full meaning. I am going to suggest that you pray with the weekend Gospel reading during the week. This type of prayer is called *lectio divina* or divine reading. Google USCCB daily readings and then pick the date. Read the Gospel twice and then sit in prayer for a few minutes and see how Jesus is speaking to you. Maybe write down a few brief notes in your journal. I do this every week and by the end of the week I have a homily, and you probably will to. You can see if your homily is at all like mine. The Gospels are incredibly rich and they will speak to you in different ways depending upon where you are in your life. I have been praying and preaching on these same readings for 22 years and every time a Gospel reading comes up it speaks to me in a different way. Jesus is modeling to us how he is calling us to live our lives and the more we read and pray with the readings the better we know how to follow him. Jesus is always reaching out to the poor, the outcasts, the marginalized and those who do not quite fit in. He is not condemning them, he is loving them.

Jesus is present to us in the Eucharist and in the priest who acts in *persona Christi*, or in the person of Christ. When we receive the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus, he becomes physically part of us. When we leave Mass we are living tabernacles. You

are what you eat. We become what we receive. We have to allow him to affect how we live.

The fourth way Jesus is present at Mass is in the congregation. Jesus tells us “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” God is found in people as well as in the space between people. We experience Jesus when we extend and receive love from one another. One of our parishioners was telling me this week that a young child was talking a little during Mass, making a little noise and parents are always self conscious about that. Three adults turned around and smiled. That was Jesus present among us. We are having our Parish picnic today. With all of the crime, fighting and unrest we read about at gatherings we have never had that here. The environment is just a little different here because two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name. That is Jesus present among us. We come to know Jesus when we are aware of his presence among us. The better we know Jesus, the better we can follow him.

If you were put on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? What do you think?