

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

Do we seek Jesus? This is a very important question; after all, Jesus is “*The way, the truth and the life*” (John 14:6). Are we, are *you* going after Him, following Him, asking for His new life in you? My guess is that you are, since you are reading this in our parish bulletin (or on our web site). But, as we hear in this weekend’s Gospel, it is not enough to seek Him – we have to seek Him for the right reasons.

In the Gospel today, we hear that the crowd is seeking Jesus not because of the signs that He has done, but because they ate their fill of the bread He had multiplied (though, in John 4:48, Jesus says they should believe in Him and seek Him even without the signs!). *Jesus wants us to seek Him because He loves us and we love Him.* He wants us to seek Him not for some selfish reason (that our bellies are filled, we want a miracle, or maybe that we’re afraid of Hell and don’t want to lose the grace of heaven), but out of selfless love for Him. His tender, merciful love longs for us, yearns for us, pines for us more than any human love longs or yearns or pines for anything else. **All He wants is for us to come to Him in love.**

So the question arises, if we are seeking Him, **do we seek Him for love?**

Even those of us who are striving to seek Him for the right reasons may find in ourselves mixed motives and selfish tendencies. St. Paul addresses this in the second reading today:

you should put away the old self of your former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth. Ephesians 4:22-24

We need to be renewed, remade. Even our desires are corrupted and need to be made new. This doesn’t take a genius to recognize – there are plenty of instances of how our disordered desires end up ruling and ruining our personal lives and our culture. These disordered desires, even when accepted by the culture as a whole, end up leading us away from God, the source of all life, and into the lure of death. This destroys us as a people: whether it is in greed for money or power, gluttony in our appetites, or lust in our relationships. Anything that leads us away from God’s plan and path, leads us to the heart of darkness.

St. Paul says that we need to be renewed in our minds. While *we* cannot overcome our disordered desires, **the Holy Spirit can!** As we ask the Holy Spirit to conform our hearts and minds to Christ, we will see His love transforming us. He can transform the deepest part of ourselves to be made *one with Christ* – taking on the mind of Christ. But – here’s the kicker – we need to *want* the change God will give.

If we are seeking Jesus with a sincere heart, we will each need to face this problem. Do we want Jesus only for what He can give us (or because of what we’re afraid to lose), or do we want Him because of love? Will we follow Him in love, even where we might not want to go? When faced with sin and our disordered desire, the response of the soul seeking Jesus for selfish reasons is: “Oh, God understands. He is a forgiving God, after all.” This response rejects personal responsibility; it rejects the need to be sorry and repent of our sins. Yes, God is merciful and forgiving, but we must be willing to **let go** of the sins that need to be forgiven, and place them in the hands of God.

When faced with sin and our disordered desire, the response of a soul seeking Jesus for love is: “**O God, be merciful to me, a sinner**” (Luke 18:13). The loving soul does not run from responsibility for sin or try to excuse it, but runs to the God of mercy, recognizing how evil sin is, and throws him or herself onto the God of mercy and love, begging God to transform even the deepest disorder within.

So the question arises again, **are we seeking Jesus out of love?** Let us pray that we will have a renewal of our minds, so that we may seek Jesus not for what He can do for us, but because we love Him.