

**Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B
(Oct. 15, 2006)**

Encountering the Lord

Not so long ago I heard a first grade teacher in a Catholic school recount the following incident. Her pupils were having art class and drawing pictures. She came across one little girl who was obviously very hard at work on her drawing project. The teacher looked over her shoulder and asked her, “What are you drawing?” She replied, “It’s a picture of God.” The teacher responded as gently as she could, “But nobody knows what God looks like.” Without missing a beat, the child replied, “They will when I am through.”

I guess in some way or other we all would like to know what God looks like, but of course it’s difficult to picture God since God is pure spirit. However in spite of that, it seems to me we can get some idea of what God looks like by considering what it is that happens when we come together for the Eucharist.

You remember that a month ago we began a year of prayer at the Eucharist. Every month during this year the homilies will focus on our celebration of the Eucharist. Today is the second Sunday when all the priests will talk about our Eucharistic celebration.

So just what is it that happens when we gather every Sunday or during the week to celebrate the Eucharist?

Well, obviously a lot of things happen. For me first and foremost is the fact that we encounter the Lord. We meet Jesus Christ and in him we also meet our living God. How do we meet the Lord? How do we meet Jesus? The Second Vatican Council published a Decree on the Liturgy in which we learn that Jesus is present in our Eucharistic celebration in four different ways. He is present in the Word that is proclaimed in the first part of the Mass. He is obviously present in the bread and wine that have become his body and blood. He is present in the priest and ministers at the altar. And last but by no means least he is present in the congregation that gathers for the celebration.

Jesus is present in the Word that is proclaimed. We believe that

Sacred Scripture is the Word of God, that through it God speaks to us and helps us to understand what it is that God asks of us. Indeed by listening to God speak in the words of scripture we hear the answer to the question of the rich man in our Gospel passage. "What must I do to gain eternal life?" So obviously it is important that we listen closely to all the readings and that we respond with the responsorial psalm, singing the response or reciting it, so that it becomes a real prayer and an integral part of our celebration. As you know we give special respect to the presence of Jesus in the Gospels since we stand to listen to what the Evangelists tell us about Jesus and to find out what this might mean for us in our lives today. Here at Holy Trinity we give even more solemnity to the Gospel with our brief procession with the Book of the Gospels

Jesus is present in the priest and the ministers at the altar. They are the leaders of the celebration, but in point of fact, they stand in the place of Jesus, the priest in a special way since he has been anointed for this particular purpose and without him we could not celebrate the Eucharist.

Jesus is present in the bread and wine that have become the Body and Blood of Christ. This of course is what has always been the central mystery of our celebration. So much so that through the ages it has pretty much overwhelmed and almost cancelled out any attention to the other presences of the Lord until the Council reminded us of them. It's a truly awesome mystery. The very God who made us became one of us, took on our flesh and blood and bone, and lived as we do, laughed and cried, suffered and died. But beyond that he left us this memorial of himself, his very presence in our midst, left it in the form of food and drink, bread and wine that we receive, that become part of us, so that we in turn can become the Body of Christ. Remember what St. Augustine said, "Become what you receive. Say Amen to what you are."

I find it very symbolic that we come to Communion, not as individuals, but as a community. We come in procession, two by two, down the aisle of our church and together we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. It helps us to remember that we are not alone. The Jesus who comes to me is the same Jesus who comes to each and every one of you and he comes to us together as this community. He is truly present in us as well as in the sacrament – not in the same way, of course – but present all the

same, just as he is present in his word that is proclaimed in the first part of our celebration.

I began with a humorous story about a little girl who was going to show us what God looks like. Well, with faith in the God who is present in Jesus Christ, in the word we hear, in the sacrament we receive and so in one another, if we want to know what God looks like, perhaps all we have to do is take a good look at the person beside you or in front of you or behind you. It may take a bit of imagination, maybe quite a bit of imagination, but you know, in the long run it's really worth the effort.