

Fr. Rudy's Reflections
The Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 25, 2024

To Whom Shall We Go?

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

In life, we often face difficult choices and challenging paths. President John F. Kennedy, in his famous speech during the early 1960s, declared, "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard. . . ." This sentiment resonates deeply within our human experience. We are drawn to challenges because they push us to grow, to transcend our limits, and to achieve what seems impossible. Consider the modern example of athletes training for the Olympics, dedicating years of their lives to the pursuit of excellence, not because it is easy, but because the struggle itself is meaningful. This tendency to take on hard tasks is intrinsic to our nature and reflects a deeper spiritual truth.

Last week's Gospel reading from John presented Jesus explaining the profound doctrine of the real presence of Jesus Christ found in the Eucharist. This teaching, central to our Catholic faith, was and is difficult for many to accept, causing some of his disciples of that day to turn away. The hurdle of this teaching continues to be a point of division among Christians today, as evidenced by the various Protestant denominations who do not share this belief. The assertion that Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist—not merely symbolically, but actually—is a challenging but fundamental concept.

Jesus is the Word of God made flesh, and his words about eating his flesh and drinking his blood are not meant to be taken metaphorically. Jesus is not merely a prophet; he is the Son of God, and our relationship with him through the Eucharist is mystical and transformative. This relationship is essential for our salvation and participation in the life of heaven.

Belief in the real presence of the Eucharist is a core tenet of our Catholic faith. It is a belief that demands a deep, unwavering commitment. When Jesus asked his remaining twelve disciples if they also wanted to leave as the others did, Peter responded, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." This moment was pivotal, underscoring the profound truth that our faith is anchored in Jesus Christ, and that the Church, through the successor of Peter, our Pope, continues to proclaim this truth.

God has given us the gift of free will and with that comes the responsibility to choose. As Catholics, we are called to embrace the teachings of Jesus, no matter how difficult. This includes the belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is a point of faith that we cannot negotiate or dilute. We accept it not because it is easy, but because it is hard. . .and will make all the difference!

In embracing the hard path of faith, we follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before us, recognizing that in the challenges we face, there are opportunities for growth and deeper communion with God. The Eucharist is not just a ritual; it is the source and summit of our faith, a mystery that draws us closer to the divine. It is our choice to accept this gift, to walk, perhaps, a more difficult path, and with this belief in our hearts and minds, we shall achieve eternal life.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy