

**Fr. John Sassani**  
**Homily Given on August 5, 2009**  
**Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time**  
**Liturgical Year B**

Last week, I went on an eight-day retreat. I had dinner with my family before I left. In the course of the evening, my niece asked, "What do you do on retreat?" I told her, "Pray, go to Mass, pray some more, have a meal. The retreat helps me to know Christ better." I hoped she had more questions that she could have asked but, if she did, she didn't ask them.

Then when I was preparing my homily for today, there it was – a simple, clear explanation of what happens on retreat: I learn Christ. What does St. Paul mean in telling the Ephesians – and us here in Newton – to learn Christ? It means to let Christ and His way of living grasp me so that I become a new person: Him.

Catholic Christianity has a very high ideal, a lofty goal – to learn Christ. Not just to learn about Him, but to grow into Him. This is possible because that's why Christ came into the world – was sent into the world by the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit in His life and ministry – and had a profound effect on people whose lives He touched, then and now! He didn't just make them and us good people. He made us His disciples – students – who, as St. Paul says, learn Christ.

"Whoever sees Me sees the Father." Christ is The Sacrament, the tangible, real presence of the Father. Whoever sees you and sees me is meant to see Christ – feel Christ – be served by Christ. This is way more than being a good person. This is the gradual transformation of our lives.

The One Who made five loaves and two fish be food for the five thousand is in the change business, and the change He desires to make in us is that we become Him – learn Him – to be His presence to others. We become His presence in providing backpacks for school kids who are needy, selling coffee here in Newton to benefit the people in San Marcos Honduras, donating old clothes to St. Vincent de Paul or baby clothes to Pregnancy Help for young women who have made a choice for life.

Life is filled with ways for us to learn Christ, but the Eucharist is crucial in this learning. Christ comes in Holy Communion to give Himself to us. He gives Himself in His generosity so that He can be with us, can fill our minds with His wisdom and our hearts with His compassion. He gives Himself so that we can serve others, so that they can be touched by Christ through us and learn Christ because we have learned Him.