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**21st SUNDAY O/T Yr A — August 23, 2020 - WHO DO YOU SAY I AM**

**Recently Deceased:** Angelo Vocale, **Anniversaries:** Renata Romanow  
*We especially pray for all the deceased whose names are on the Church pews & the Resurrection Chapel*

*Please pray for the Sick:* John Cianciarullo, Leanne,

**"Who do you think I am?"** In 1896, after 15 centuries, Athens renewed the Olympic Games. You can imagine how proud the Greeks were to host the first modern Olympics. The Greeks were by far the most successful nation in terms of total medals (46), 26 more than the U.S. Nevertheless, their number of first-place finishes (10) was one fewer than the Americans who gained 11. The last competition was the marathon. Greece's entrant was named Spyridon Louis, a water carrier with a little military training, and not much competitive background. He learned endurance by transporting mineral water from his village to the city. When the race started, Louis was far back in the pack of marathoners. But as the miles passed, he moved up steadily. One by one the leaders began to falter. The French hero fell in agony. The hero from the United States had to quit the race. Soon, word reached the stadium that a lone runner was approaching the arena, and the emblem of Greece was on his chest! He even slowed down for a glass of wine. As the excitement grew, Prince George of Greece hurried to the stadium entrance where he met Louis and ran with him to the finish line. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece\\_at\\_the\\_1896\\_Summer\\_Olympics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece_at_the_1896_Summer_Olympics)). — In this sports tale, we have something of the history of the human race. Jesus Christ started from way back in the pack. He was born in relative obscurity, never had many followers, commanded no army, erected no edifices, wrote no books. He died young, was buried in a borrowed grave, and you'd think he'd be quickly forgotten. But, no! His reputation has grown, so that today Jesus is worshiped on every continent, has more followers than ever before and sixteen times has been pictured on the cover of Time magazine, while Jesus' sayings have been translated into more than 200 languages. Consider: Socrates taught for 40 years, Plato for 50, and Aristotle, 40. Jesus Christ only taught for 3 years. Which has influenced the world more, than 130 years of classical thought or 3 years of Christ's? In the Library of Congress there are 1,172 reference books on William Shakespeare, 1,752 on George Washington, 2,319 on Abe Lincoln, and 5,152 on Jesus Christ. Perhaps H. G. Wells best summed up the runaway difference in interest. "Christ," he wrote, "is the most unique person of history. No man can write a history of the human race without giving first and foremost place to the penniless teacher of Nazareth." As Emerson once noted: "The name of Jesus is not so much written as PLOUGHED into the history of the world." Today's Gospel challenges us to accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour as St. Peter did at Caesarea Philippi.

**JOKE OF THE WEEK:** A Lutheran, a Catholic, and an Episcopalian—ended up at the Pearly Gates. It was St. Peter's day off, so Jesus was administering the entrance exam. "The question is simple," he said. "Who do you say that I am?" The Lutheran began, "The Bible says . . . Jesus interrupted and said, "I know what the Bible says; who do you say that I am?" The Lutheran said, "I don't know," and fell through a trapdoor to that other place. The Catholic said "The Pope says . . ." But Jesus interrupted him and said, "I know what the Pope says; who do you say that I am?" "I'm not sure," said the Catholic, and he fell through the trapdoor to that other place. Jesus turned to the Episcopalian and asked, "Who do you say that I am?" The Episcopalian replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" Then, just as Jesus smiled and gestured for the Pearly Gates to be opened, the Episcopalian said, "but on the other hand....."

**Covid 19 Catechesis Fr Lawrence Farley (Canada)**

As I write these words, we are under effective lockdown because of the spread of the Corona Virus, often referred to as "Covid 19". In the current absence of a vaccine, the health departments of the various governments here in Canada have determined that the only way to slow the spread of the disease is by "social distancing"—i.e. by staying away from others by a distance of several feet. This obviously presents a problem for those assembling in all public events. Therefore, our bishops have decided most reluctantly to close the churches for now to cooperate with the authorities in being good citizens, since even when one sanitizes walls, tables, chairs, and icons, one cannot keep a sufficient distance from the other worshippers. The issue, of course, is one of charity: even if one does not care for one's own health, one wants to avoid giving the disease to another. Simply saying, "Trust God" is not an answer. We are repeatedly commanded to obey the secular authorities God has placed over us (Matthew 22:21, Romans 13:1-2, 1 Peter 2:13-15). We are also taught by divine example not to leap off the pinnacle of a temple, trusting that God will catch us and save us from the consequences of our own stupidity. God gave us all a brain, and He expects us to keep it plugged in and turned on. This present crisis teaches us a number of important lessons, even apart from the lesson that we should obey the secular authorities and our bishops. It teaches us the importance of fervent prayer. It teaches us the virtues of patience and of perseverance. And it teaches us the importance and true nature of the Church, which is that of community. We have already seen that temporary separation from the church community can be an effective Lenten discipline. Such a separation from the church community is an effective discipline precisely because it is temporary and unusual. It is the same as any other kind of Lenten fasting: abstinence from meat is an effective discipline because generally we do not abstain from meat. (Vegans, presumably, find other forms of Lenten discipline.) And the separation from our fellow parishioners at worship is a discipline precisely because most Sundays find us together with them. It is the stark difference between our present practice and the norm that makes the practice into a discipline. We see then that the reception of the holy Eucharist cannot sensibly be separated from this gathering together as a church. Indeed, the very word "church"—ecclesia in Greek—means "gathering". Individual Christians gather together on Sunday, and the result of this action is a gathering, an assembly, an ecclesiae, a church. Christ has promised to be among His people when they gather like this, even if the gathering is a very small one consisting only of two or three (Matthew 8:20). That is why the Church is the Body of Christ—Christ is present in and through this gathering and works through it in the same way as we are present in and work through our own body. The Eucharist presupposes this gathering, and supports it. St. Paul taught that when individual Christians receive the Eucharistic bread, they are thereby joined afresh to Christ in His body. In this way the Church is reconstituted every week at the Eucharist. In the words of Paul, "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). In other words, we become the one body of Christ because we all share in the same Eucharistic bread. The Eucharist is what Christians do on Sunday when they gather together in the Lord's Name, and the celebration of the Eucharist presupposes a previous gathering. That is why the Eucharist cannot be celebrated alone. The priest cannot serve the Eucharist (or "say Mass" in old western terms) all by himself, for the Eucharist presupposes a gathering of all the faithful, even if the gathering comprises no more than two or three people. And for the same reason, one cannot receive Holy Communion at home by oneself with the aid of a television set. I remember in the days of my youth watching Rex Humbard on television, who billed himself as "your T.V. pastor". He would sometimes hold a Communion service on his television show and invite those at home to have Communion with him by taking a piece of bread and a sip of wine (well, grape juice actually) at the time they all did. The problem (one of many) was that those at home could not gather together with everyone else having Communion. They were not a part of the church or the assembly because they did not in fact assemble. Viewing television at home is not assembling; it is sitting down and watching. To be part of the ecclesiae one must leave home and assemble. That is what the word means. What then of the ancient practice (mentioned by St. Justin Martyr in his Apology chapter 67) of the deacons taking the Eucharist to those who were not present at the Sunday morning assembly? This is the exception that proves the rule. Those to whom the deacons took Holy Communion were the sick and shut-in who were not able to assemble. Those absent did not decide to sleep in or stay away because found assembling inconvenient. And the deacons did not commune them simply to give them the sacrament, as if the Church was simply a kind of sacramental outlet, making available the Eucharist to individuals; it was to preserve their unity with the assembly from which their sickness had temporarily separated them. Their reception was of the Eucharist did not only unite them to Christ, as if it were a spiritual vitamin which worked by itself apart from the assembly. The Eucharist they received from the deacons united them to the assembly where it was celebrated. Put another way, it united them to Christ who had manifested Himself in the assembly. The Eucharist therefore reveals the centrality of the assembling Church. This is one of the lessons that Covid 19 teaches us. During this present crisis we fast from assembling in the same that we fast from certain foods during Great Lent. And the discipline of fasting from food sharpens our appetite for that from which we . . . After forty days of fasting from meat, fish, and dairy, we look forward to feasting on them again at Pascha when the Great Fast is over. We miss eating these foods, and feel the abstinence keenly. In the same way, we now look forward to assembling again when the crisis has subsided, since we keenly miss the Eucharistic assembly. We miss not only receiving the Eucharist, but also miss seeing our friends. If the rigours of the fast make even (for me anyway) McDonald's hamburgers seem appealing, perhaps the rigours of missing Church will make appealing even the sight of some of our parishioners whom we previously found difficult! Meanwhile, we continue to fast, abstaining from the Eucharist and from assembling as a church. Let us use this time of abstinence to grow closer to Christ through fervent prayer and to let it sharpen our appetite for the Eucharist. Thanks to Covid 19, we may never again take for granted the Sunday Liturgy.