

**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter (Cycle C) Homily**  
**Saint William, Champion | May 22, 2022**  
**Acts 15:1-2, 22-29 | Rev 21:10-14, 22-23 | Jn 14:23-29**

Deacon Robert Mintus

Every so often, while I'm flipping through the TV channels in the evening, I run across the game show Family Feud, in which teams score points by guessing the most popular answers to a question. So if I asked one hundred people at random, "Where is Jesus present in the sacrifice of the Eucharist?", I think I would get the following answers, and pretty much in this order:

1. First, in the bread and wine that is transformed into the Blessed Sacrament – Jesus's body and blood.
2. Second, in the words of sacred Scripture.
3. Third, in the priest or presider.
4. Fourth, in the prayers and the music.

But I think that the buzzer would go off and the other team might have a good chance to steal the points on the board before the final answer would come up... And what is that obscure answer? It's in the assembly that is seated in the pews. If we take a moment and turn and look at our neighbor to our right and left, that is where Jesus is found. If we take a moment and look

in the mirror... that is where Jesus is found. Sometimes this seems difficult to believe, as this presence is often there quiet and below the surface. It requires us to look a little more closely with our eyes of faith.

For most of us, it is often easy to forget that we are the Body of Christ. If a stranger came up to you and asked where to find St. William Parish, how would you answer? Again, I think that most of us would begin by giving them directions from our current location to 5411 Mahoning Avenue in Champion – but that's not exactly the correct answer, because **the building is only the place where the Church meets**. The structure, altar, pews, piano, organ are only here to allow us to come together to meet for our common worship. I think that many of our other Christian denominations express this well when they speak about BEING CHURCH.

When the apostles first gathered the ancient Christian communities together, they didn't have fancy stone cathedrals... what they had was each other. Neither Father nor I was here when St. William was formed as a church... but neither was the worship space we occupy and meet in together today. Didn't we begin by meeting in a school?

Each week, we gather as Church... a family of faith. We meet for prayer and share a common meal... and it's no different than when your family gathers together on a Sunday afternoon or a holiday. When people are away for any reason – whether they're sick, or have to work, or travelling – they are missed. Our celebration of the mass is no different when you are absent. On the other hand, it is wonderful when everyone is able to be here and join in. We each bring the gift of our presence every Sunday, holy day, and even on the weekdays when we gather together to be church.

Over the last twenty years, we have struggled as a Church as we have closed worship sites, not only in our own Youngstown Diocese, but also in other locations. And even other Christian denominations have struggled with this issue. Sometimes we have to deal with the harsh reality that **there aren't enough people BEING CHURCH that require us to keep that building.**

But hopefully, we remember that who we are as Christians is stronger than our attachment to a specific mass time, or a worship space, or even a beloved pastor or deacon. We are the Church. Just like we are the family. Hopefully, we would not stop gathering together just because dinner was at 7PM instead of 5PM, because they were having pasta instead of meat loaf for

dinner, or because Uncle Joe or Aunt Rose passed away and sold their home. But I've heard comments like this – and maybe you have as well - when we have to deal with the realities of changing schedules or closing buildings.

Just like families often have to deal with real issues, our Church families also have to deal with issues and challenges. Our first reading reminds us that even in the early Church, they had disagreements at times. But they worked through those disagreements as a family.

Jesus reminds us that if we love Him, He will come with the Father and dwell in us, and not only that, He will send us his Spirit to help us know him better. And finally, we will receive the gift of his peace. Now that doesn't mean that everything will be easy, or that we won't have to work or struggle, or that we will all be able to agree on everything. But it does mean that through the help of the Spirit, we will be able to resolve the issues and challenges we face for the good of all.

Each person here today – with NO EXCEPTIONS – is called to go forth in the world and be Church when our mass concludes today. Nourished by Christ's body and blood, we are called to be living tabernacles, to carry the peace of Jesus Christ with us wherever we go, whether it's to our homes, or

work, or school, or to anywhere else we go. We are not meant to leave Jesus here at the conclusion of mass.

After Father's final blessing today, I have the privilege of charging you with a task, to remind us that while the mass is ended, we are called to share that peace of Christ with everyone we meet. What does that mean? It means that St. William Parish isn't found just at 5411 Mahoning Avenue... Because if we work to live our lives BEING CHURCH, then St. William Parish exists and makes Christ present all over Champion, Warren, Bazetta, Howland, Leavittsburg, Cortland, Southington, and everywhere else our lives take us.