

Homily: July 19, 2024

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Today, we celebrate the cross of victory. We thank God for displaying his victorious boundless love the the paschal event of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Our celebration today hopefully shakes us out of a routine ordinariness about Jesus, as we try to absorb the greatness of God through Jesus' victorious cross. We trust God's compassionate love and pray, "Lord, have mercy!"

This homily is a reflection on Jesus' description of himself as "Something greater than the temple is here." Yes, Jesus and his obedience to the God of love are greater than any temple. This Eucharist is greater than any temple. Receiving the body and blood of Jesus is more precious than any temple—more than St. Peter's Basilica and more than the most magnificent church you've seen or heard about. Jesus is greater than what, for you, is the most precious or sacred spot on this whole planet.

If, in the honesty at the bottom of your heart, you hear yourself questioningly saying, "REALLY??"-- that may be a sign for you that what has become all too ordinary must be reconsidered and reflected upon. My thoughts about Jesus, his word, his bread and wine, and his Eucharist must be revamped and renewed. we will need to take Sabbath time (particularly God-focused time) to continue absorbing how great Jesus is for our lives. What makes Jesus so important in my life? How do we articulate that? To reflect and articulate Jesus' role and importance in my life, I take Sabbath time—daily with scripture or reading someone else's reflections about Jesus.

When and how did Jesus become greater for me than any temple in this world? It may have been a substantial one-time experience that convinced me of Jesus being my redeemer. It may be a more frequent or regular experience or a particular type of experience that usually is a moment of Jesus redeeming me, of Jesus making me another step more loving than before.

I offer one example from my personal life of Jesus redeeming. I participated in a special program upon returning from Indonesia fourteen years ago. One day, a counselor told me in a group, "Virgil, when will you accept—I mean, really accept—that you are a mixed bag?" That was a "Boom!" Or "Wow!" moment.

That counselor's question has remained with me for the past fourteen years and reminds me to renew my belief that God accepts me, not just as a mixed bag,

but as a BELOVED mixed bag. The victorious cross we commemorate today became victorious in part by Jesus accepting a mixed bag right beside him, when he told the repentant criminal crucified beside him that he would be with him in paradise that day.

So, my self-acceptance as a beloved mixed bag usually invites a more profound acceptance of my blessings, strengths, and God's gifts, along with mistakes, weaknesses, and the challenging aspects of my personality. My perception of myself as a beloved mixed bag has often consoled me. Moreover, accepting and believing in my beloved mixed-bagness helps me be compassionate and patient with myself and others. Yes, Jesus is saving me from harmful self-centeredness and egotism. Yes, Jesus is victorious in my life.

Jesus was very accurate in saying about himself, "Something greater than the temple is here." AMEN and AMEN!