Easter Sunday, 4/17/22—8:00 PM and 9:30 AM

The story goes: Mrs. Martha Smith went to Mass every day. Father Jones, the pastor, was very used to seeing her at Church. One morning after Mass, Father Jones was standing at the Church’s doors greeting people as they left. As usual, he greeted Martha and asked how she was doing. She said, “Oh, Father Jones, not so well: my husband died last night.” Father Jones said how sorry he was to receive this news, and then he asked Martha, “Did your husband have any last words?” Martha said that, in fact, yes, he did and that his last words were, “Martha, put that gun down!”

While we probably have never pulled that actual trigger as did our mythical Mrs. Martha Smith, I’m sure that we all have been tempted to do so many times in our lives. Maybe we have not pulled that trigger literally, but haven’t we all done so figuratively or symbolically many times such as in the form of sharing gossip, holding grudges, sending a nasty email, refusing to talk with someone, and the like?

To be a Catholic Christian means to believe in the impossible. To the world, it is impossible that the dead be brought back to life, but yet we believe it. To the world, it is impossible that ordinary bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus, yet we believe it. To the world, it is impossible that ordinary water can make us to become sons and daughters of God, yet we believe it. To the world, it is impossible that ordinary olive oil can bring about healing of serious illness or that ordinary olive oil can make us apostles of Jesus, yet we believe it.

But it isn’t just sacramental moments where we believe in the impossible; it’s also with regard to daily life. To be a Catholic Christian means to believe that, with God’s help, I can be freed from my addictions. To be a Catholic Christian means to believe that, with God’s help, I can forgive the person who has gravely harmed me. To be a Catholic Christian means to believe that, with God’s help, I can rise from the dead, no matter what form that death takes. The question for each one of us is: How willing am I to let God bring about the impossible, to bring about a resurrection, in me and through me?

Ordinary bread and wine, ordinary water, ordinary olive oil have no say in whether they will become Jesus' Body and Blood at Mass or whether they will convey Jesus’ life, healing, or power in Baptism, in Confirmation, or in the Sacrament of the Sick, but we do. Our choice is either to allow God to achieve the impossible through me or to block God from achieving the impossible through me. The question is: how completely will I let Jesus fill me with himself, or, as St. John the Baptist said, how willing am I to decrease so that Jesus might increase in me?

St. Ignatius of Loyola, back in the early 16th century, wrote a beautiful prayer of self-surrender, called the *Suscipe*, a Latin word which means “take” or “accept,” a prayer in which he invites Jesus to fill him more and more completely with Himself. It goes like this, ***"Take, Lord, receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, my whole will, all that I have and all that I possess. You gave it all to me, Lord; I give it all back to you. Do with it as you will, according to your good pleasure. Give me your love and your grace; for with this I have all that I need."***

The St. Louis Jesuits turned that prayer into a song\*, a song that Tina will sing for us momentarily. It’s a prayer that each of us needs to pray daily if not several times a day. In this way, we will become more and more like the bread and wine, like the water and the oil through which God brings about the impossible. As we listen to this song, I would encourage us all to pray along with it and make its words our own. In this way, by this surrender, God will be able to bring about the impossible in us and through us.

\*“Take, Lord, Receive” by the St. Louis Jesuits (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ngqSG0RMWM>)