Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time: 1/29/23—5:00 PM, 7:30 and 11:30 AM

I had an “a ha!” discovery last Saturday morning. I knew that we were going to be hearing Jesus’ beatitudes today, and I was thinking over that fact when I heard last Saturday morning’s gospel passage. It was really short, only two lines long, verses 20 and 21 of Chapter 3; ***Jesus came with his disciples into the house. Again the crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat. When his relatives heard of this, they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."***That comment made by his relatives kept rattling around in my head, and I realized that those relatives were correct, that, by human standards, Jesus was “out of his mind,” and I think that’s so in several ways.

First, some weeks ago, I shared with you a quote from the great mystic and teacher St. Catherine of Siena, that God is “pazzo d’amore,” that God is “crazy in love” with us humans, to the point of having his Son be born among us petty, sinful, ungrateful humans and that Jesus is also “pazzo d’amore,” “crazy in love,” by being willing to be nailed to a cross for us, the innocent one for the guilty as St. Peter writes in his first epistle. Our God, Jesus, is “out of his mind” with love for us.

Second, our God, Jesus, is “out of his mind” because of some of the things he asks us to believe. Is it really logical for us to believe that we really receive the complete presence and life of God at Communion when we take into ourselves something that looks like a poker chip? It is really logical for us to believe that a God who created a Universe really cares for us humans whom, as I like to say, are specks of dust living on speck of dust we call Earth?

Third, our God, Jesus, is “out of his mind” because of how he expects us to live. That’s what struck me about these beatitudes heard today when I heard that two-lined Gospel from Mark last Saturday. Consider what Jesus is telling us in these beatitudes. He is giving us a roadmap to happiness, telling us we can only be happy by recognizing our utter need for him, only by wanting the will of God to come about much as we want food and drink, only by being people whose hearts are match Jesus’ heart, by respecting the uniqueness and worth of others even our enemies, by living lives that match Jesus’ even his suffering. Most humans would think Jesus is out of his mind asking us to live in this way

If these are three ways that God, Jesus, shows us that he is out of his mind, I’d like to offer three ways we can live to enable us to follow him, enable us to live out of our minds too.

First, we need to feast on that crazy love that God, Jesus, has for us. We need to reflect on that love regularly and deeply so as to grow in our appreciation of it. “All creation bears the footprints of God,” of God’s love, as St. Bonaventure stated in the 13th century. “Every creature is a glistening, glittering mirror of divinity,” of God’s love as St. Hildegard of Bingen said in the 12th century. Indeed just as fish swim in water so too are we always swimming in God’s love. For us not to take the time to feast on that love regularly, daily, is to condemn ourselves to a spiritual starvation diet.

Second, we need to let ourselves be embraced by those face-to-face encounters with God, Jesus, we call “Sacraments.” We Catholics tend to use the words “Real Presence” for the Eucharist, but, while Communion is the biggest and best, we need to remember that every sacrament a form of “real presence” and that, in them, we are personally encountering Jesus as much as did the Twelve Apostles two thousand years ago. Through those sacraments, he is still feeding, healing, speaking to us as he fed, healed, and spoke to the people two thousand years ago.

Third, we need to make ourselves present to each other, as the one large family that we are. St. Paul wasn’t exaggerating when he spoke regularly of the Church as the Body of Christ and how its many parts through different make up the one united and living Body we call the Church. Very concretely that’s where parish life comes in, no matter if it’s a Bible study, going to Mass, attending a Men’s Club meeting, helping with a parish or school activity, participating in a holy hour, Suppers 8, the “Living Joy” series, we are making ourselves present to each other, and building each other up, but, when we don’t participate in such ways, we are causing the Body of Christ to limp, to be handicapped.

In human terms, Jesus is out of his mind, but he also asks us to live and to believe in that same way. By our feasting on his love, by letting ourselves be embraced by his sacraments, by being present to each other, we are able to imitate Jesus’ own crazy love.