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Imagine for a moment that you grew up hearing stories about a famous relative or yours, maybe your grandfather, who was a great explorer. You had never known him because he went missing shortly after you were born, but you were always hearing stories of his adventures. You knew he was a great man and always wished you had met him. While cleaning the attic, you come across his journal that he kept for years. You finally are able to learn even more about this beloved figure. The stories you hear about him, from his own perspective, shed new insight into his life. You might even weep as you read the stories about how he met his wife, how he felt at the wedding of your parents, and how he was overjoyed to have seen your birth in the final days of his illness. This is the type sentiment the Jewish people felt as they heard the Word of God read to them. It might seem odd to us that they were weeping at hearing the Word of God, we don't begin sobbing during the first reading, but for them, it was through this that they were going to know God.

Now imagine something even more amazing. One day there is a knock at the door and it is a man who says, "I'm your grandfather." Here is your chance to see him in the flesh. He had survived that last journey, and now you get to meet him. This is what it would have been like for the people hearing Jesus say, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus is saying, "Everything you heard, all those prophecies, are about me." You get to see the Messiah. Of course, this doesn't go so well for him, as he is soon chased out, basically because he might be an imposter. For others, though, it was the long-awaited fulfillment.

Now think what it means to know someone. I know, from Google, that Tom Brady's birthday is August 3, that his favorite color is blue, that he is 6'4", and that his favorite cereal is Honey Nut Cheerios. That does not mean that I know Tom Brady. I know facts about him. There is a temptation with God that we might come to know only facts about him, but knowing the Bible is not just knowing facts about God, as if God were saying, "Hi. I'm God. My favorite color is blue." When God acts and speaks, he reveals himself through his words and deeds. We actually get to know God. That's why I get so frustrated when our teens in Catholic schools tell me that they are told to memorize facts about the Bible for exams like who are the Pharisees or the Sadducees. That's great, but how about, "What is the relevance for Christianity that these were Jesus' intellectual opponents?" Clearly the Holy Spirit thought it important enough to record those events as the ones to remember. It must tell us about who God is. Likewise, if all we do here in our religious education classes or sacramental prep, like baptism prep for parents or RCIA, is tell people facts about God and not introduce them to Jesus through the Church he founded, we have failed.

And this brings me to our second reading. How is that we have access to Christ today? Does Jesus show up at the door like grandpa? Not quite, but he does something else. We might think the people of Jesus' time had some special access as they walked alongside him and we are missing out, but when we were baptized, for each one of us the Holy Spirit has been poured out

into our hearts. We are formed into the Mystical Body of Christ, we are the living memory of his presence. The Church is not just some club we have founded that we can choose or not choose to participate in. It is a mystical reality. When someone encounters the Church, they should come to know Christ by the way we live and speak about him. It should be like those great family memories except grandpa's spirit is not like the Holy Spirit. Christ is a presence now in a way that grandpa cannot be. We might have powerful memories of grandpa, but Christ can be present now.

Saint Paul tells us that we are all one body who need each other, each with our own gifts from the Spirit, known as charisms (and yes, every person has charisms). Some teach; others heal; others prophesy. That is because none of us has all the charisms but together, bonded together by the Spirit in charity, we actually each reflect all the various aspects of Christ. We need one another and cannot absent ourselves from the Church. There is no option for a "Jesus and me and the Bible" Christianity.

Here is a helpful image: if you came into the parish around 3:30 on a Sunday afternoon, you will hear our band warming up. As they get ready, Vinny will be playing some classic rock song to kill time while others pluck away and tune. All the noises together are chaos, but when they start to play, each playing his or her own part in the same song, they are not all doing the same thing, but together produce one beautiful sound. There is a unity in their diversity. This is true of the Church, too, where the differences between a Saint Francis and a Saint Teresa of Calcutta and a Saint Thomas More and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati all are true reflections of the work of God and the Holy Spirit. Together they show us all the aspects of Christ.

Not just people but cultures are purified so the thought of Plato and Aristotle can be used to show forth the richness of Christ, the hymns of Ireland, Germany, and Poland can all reflect the richness of Christ, as can the beautiful polyphonic music of Bolivia, the great African American spirituals, or the chants of Armenia. Saints come from every land like Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, a Native American, or Saint Josephine Bakhita, a former African slave.

The Catholic faith is called Catholic because it has the fullness of all that Christ revealed, but all of that is reflected in the universal nature of the Church, that Heaven will have "a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue." It is in and through the Church, with all her members and all her richness, that we come to know Christ today: not just facts about him, but his person, and once we know him, we must use our charisms and our gifts to reveal his face to the world.