

When I was young, like many boys, I grew up loving to play video and computer games. Most games allowed you to save your progress and restart as needed until you won or got the result you wanted. However, some games didn't allow this and some even added the "iron man" mode. That mode meant that once your game character died, it was over, there were no "redoes", no restarting, no save point to go back to. Such consequences meant that every decision mattered with the game, hours of focus poured into the game could be lost, which made it much more meaningful if not also a bit stressful.

With so many things going on already this month of May, I haven't gotten around to mentioning that this is the month of our Blessed Mother. As I write this it is May 13th, the Memorial of Our Lady of Fatima when the Virgin Mary first appeared to three shepherd children in Portugal in 1917. Her message to them and to the world was basically a reminder that our life on earth in some sense is in "iron man" mode, meaning, once we die, there are no restarts, or do-overs. We have to make the most of the time we have been given, so Our Lady called us to pray the rosary and repent for our sins and do penance for others so that they would convert too. I know the Fatima message is not a jolly one but we need to be regularly reminded to make the most of this life, for we only get one life to make the most of.

--- How do people know that we are Catholics? I am blessed as a priest that my clerical garb is easy identifier for me, it breaks the ice with no words needed. Many people wear crosses or holy medals that people can see, that marks us as Christ's disciples. But today, Jesus gave us the real way we can be known as His: ***"This is how all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*** It is a rather sobering thought to ask ourselves: "Do others know that I'm Jesus' disciples based on how I love others?"

We often think of discipleship in terms of our intellectual convictions, that aspect of faith which is about beliefs like the Creed. We believe all sorts of unique things as Catholics that Jesus Christ revealed to us: the truth of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, the reality of purgatory, the seven sacraments, the office of the papacy, and so forth. The intellectual aspect of faith is essential because we can't love what we don't know. The Lord wants us to know Him through His works and teachings so as to love Him and our neighbor all the more.

But today's teaching from Jesus focuses us on our will and how we choose to live in our daily lives towards others. Sadly, a person might believe all the right things and behave in the wrong ways. We have all experienced others, perhaps we ourselves, profess good and true things, but undermine our witness by our slow response to do good. People hold Christians to high standards, because they expect us to live like Jesus. Gandhi was asked once why he never became a Christian and he responded: *"I would have been a Christian if I ever met one."* Sincere goodness can be more persuasive than truth.

God bless,

Fr. Mike

