



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

My initial reaction to this weekend's Gospel is *amazement* at how God provides for us. Jesus looks out at the crowds, how they are in such need of a Good Shepherd. He sees the need, and He tells the disciples to pray for the need to be filled. But then He does something else – He empowers them to meet the need. They need Jesus, but Jesus in His humanity can only be in one place at a time, so He gives the disciples the authority to be His presence to the people:

**"Make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'
Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons."
(Matthew 10:7-8)**

When referring to the priesthood, we use specific language about this, that the priest acts *in persona Christi capatis* – in the person of Christ the head. The Church recognizes an incredible reality about this: when the priest baptizes, it is Christ baptizing; when the priest absolves sins, it is Christ absolving sins; when the priest consecrates the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, when He says, "THIS IS MY BODY," it is not the body of Fr. Von or Fr. Kelley or Fr. John, but the Body of Christ, for it is Christ who consecrates.

This may not be so surprising to people who put priests on a pedestal (please don't do that to me... I've been knocked down too many times to want to be up there!), but the reality is incredible – God uses us to answer prayers, to answer the needs of the world. Jesus sees the needs of the crowd and then gives the authority to the Apostles to be the shepherds – to bring Christ's very presence to the people.

But this is not just about the Apostles or even priests, remember. While the priest acts *in persona Christi capatis*, in a very real way, every baptized Christian acts *in persona Christi* – in the person of Christ, as the Body of Christ. Remember the words attributed to St. Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which He looks Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are His body.

Can you imagine?! What a weight of responsibility! And yet, Jesus has poured out His Holy Spirit upon us so that we could have the strength, the grace to be His presence to the world, to be the ones who answer the need!

May we be open to all that God is doing in and through us. May we not be afraid when God calls us to be His presence to those around us. May we trust that, even in our littleness and weakness and sinfulness, God is using us – you and me – to bring His love to the world.