Last Tuesday night, you might have heard a blood-curdling scream coming from the St. Mary’s rectory at about 10;00 p.m. The New York Mets were playing some team from Washington that I never heard of; it might have been the Washington Senators or something like that…In the top of the 9th inning, the Mets scored five runs to take six run lead over the Washington Nationals. I was preparing to gloat and harass whatever National fans I could find. Then, with their last ups, the Nationals scored 7 runs in what was about three minutes and after my primal scream I tried to go to sleep.

Would it shock you to say at the moment I hated being a Met fan. Hate is a very powerful word, and more than once I have heard parents say to the son or daughter when they said something like I hate spinach or homework that they do not want that word used by them. We can live with dislike, upset, even angry but word hate seems to be over the top. We can say we hate evil, injustice, or terrorism, but it seems to say you a hate a person, even an historical figure to be not appropriate. Yet, in today’s Gospel, we heard Jesus say: *If anyone comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he or she cannot be my disciple.* Even though I have read this text many times, it still shocks me and I may even seek a way to soften the language. How can we hate our parents when they have given us life or adopted us? How can we hate the very people who have loved and cared for us? The fourth commandment is the Thou shalt honor your mother and father.

If Jesus words shocked you today, then he achieved his desire effect. Such exaggeration was common in Jewish speech as a way of making a point. Jesus does not want us to cut off our hands or pluck out our eyes if they are a source of temptation for us. He is using hyperbole to make a point and get the attention of his listeners. We also have such common expressions: I am so hungry I could eat a horse that is examples of hyperbole. Likewise, I am not sure if any student really has a ton or homework or if anyone of us has ever been so stunned that they were knocked over by a feather.

Still, Jesus is telling us that there is nothing more important in life that in being his disciple. He is the way the truth and the life. He is speaking about the path to happiness here on earth and to goal of eternal life. There is nothing more important than in loving and being loved by God and living out the teaching of the Lord.

As you new pastor, I will point out to you three familiar words we hear at every Mass celebrated that I believe captures the essence of our faith in following Jesus.

The very first is **Do this in memory of me**. Going back to the Last Supper in an upper room in Jerusalem on the eve of his passion and death, we have celebrated the dying and rising of Jesus Christ in every Eucharist. We come to this table to satisfy the hungers or our heart. Through persecutions that continue in various parts of the world to this very day, through false teachings that have almost destroyed the faith throughout the centuries, through dark church scandals that have continued to shake our faith, through a rising intolerance of faith and the modern tsunami of secularism, we continue to come to hear the word and break the bread the proclaim Christ has died, We profess our Creed in faith and say Amen, which means I believe, as we receive the Eucharist. We chant and sing: Christ has risen, Christ will come again. **Do this in memory of me.**

Secondly, before we offer each other a sign of peace, the celebrants prays: **look not on our sins O Lord, but on the faith of your church.** We are a community, the body of Christ on earth. We are sinners and saints, life-long parishioners and new immigrants, young and old, hesitant and committed, doubting and faith-filled. The Irish writer James Joyce described the Catholic Church as here comes everybody. Dorothy Day, a great woman of our faith, once an avowed atheist, found herself seeking meaning one day by slipping into a Church and going to Mass, and said after Mass, I want to go a church where women come into visit with their shopping bags. We are the broken wounded body of Christ on earth**. Look not our sin but on the faith of your church.** We are both saints and sinners.

The third key phrase I offer your from our Mass prayers is our dismissal prayer: the deacon or priest proclaims: **Go the Mass is ended.** If it has been a particularly long homily and Mass, you may respond, Thanks be to God!!! Those words are far more than invitation to go the parking lot. We are being called to go out to our homes, our families, our work, our neighborhood and parish to live what we have celebrated at Mass. We are to go and live the command of Christ to love our neighbor, to forgive those who have hurt us, to bind up the wounds of others, to feed the hungry and cloth the naked, to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ to our children and friends by what we say and how we witness to this good news.

What is the mission of the parish of St. Mary’s, Annapolis, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the universal Church, and each one of us? I love the words of St. Teresa of Avila:

*Christ has no body now but yours  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours  
Yours are the eyes with which He sees  
Yours are the feet with which He walks  
Yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world  
Yours are the hands*

*Christ has no body now but yours*