

A priest went up to the pulpit & began his homily, saying: "My friends, if you think you're going to heaven, stand up."...Everyone stood up...When they sat back down, he said: "Ok, if you think you're going to hell, stand up."...At 1st, no one stood up...but then a man way in the back of the church got up. ...The priest asked him: "Do you really think you're going to hell?"..The man replied, "Uh, not really, Father, but I hated to see you standing up alone."...

....I'd guess that we all think we are going to heaven...at least that's our plan, ...& we're going to try hard not to mess it up...because eternity is a long, long time...When we think of eternal life, it's natural to think of it as what our life is going to be like after we leave this life,...but in today's Gosp, Jesus talks about eternal life starting well before then.... Be-for we look at what Jesus said, let me set the scene...

It's the night before He would be crucified...Jesus & His disciples are in the upper rm,..He had just told them that He would be leaving them,...& He'd been encouraging them to carry on His work after He was gone...& there Jesus began to pray for Himself & for them ...There are many places in the Gospels where it says that Jesus went off to pray,...but we're not often let in on what His prayer is like...Does He pray, "Father, thank you for this wonderful day."...or "Father, How am I doing so far?"...or "Father, why did you stick me with these 12 knuckleheads?"...Well, In today's Gospel, we do get a more detailed glimpse of how Jesus prays,...and I want to focus on just the 1st part of the prayer where Jesus talks about Eternal Life.

Jesus started His prayer by asking His Father to glorify Him –to bring Him honor, adoration & praise – for finishing the work His Father had given Him to do...& that work was to bring eternal life to all those the Father had given Him...Then He said to the Father: "This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, & know Jesus Christ, the One You sent."...Did you get that?...*(rpt)*...Jesus didn't say that Eternal Life is living with Him forever in heaven after we die -- which, of course, it is-...He said Eternal Life is more than that...Eternal Life is knowing God, & knowing Jesus Christ,...right now, today...Let me put it this way,...wouldn't you luv to have the peace & happiness that you hope to enjoy in heaven...right NOW, today?...I would...In His prayer, Jesus is telling us we can have that... If we know the Father & know Jesus Christ, ...we can enjoy the blessings of Eternal Life,...NOW...We don't have to wait until we die...Our Eternal Life can begin NOW.

So the question is, "What does it mean to know God the Father, & to know Jesus?"...In the Gospel two Sundays ago, Jesus told apostle Phillip, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father, my words are His words, my works are His works...If you know Me, you know the Father"....And so, I'm only going to talk about, "What does it mean to know Jesus", bec if we know Jesus, we know God the FatherNow, there's a difference between **knowing about** Jesus,...& **knowing** J...We can know about Jesus in our heads by reading & hearing the Gospels that tell us about everything Jesus said & did,...But we won't really know Jesus in our heart & soul unless we get to know Him on a deeper & more personal level, ...unless we get to the point where knowing Jesus affects everything we say & do...Really **knowing** Jesus takes a lot more time & commitment than **knowing about** Jesus...That's true in any relationship.

We married folks know this, right?...When we first got married, we knew a lot of things **about** our spouse...I knew that Cathy was smart; she got a 98 on the English regents...I knew she loved chocolate & going shopping... she liked to talk...& she didn't like ironing...She knew I was a math whiz. ...She knew I liked playing football & showing off my muscles,...& that I didn't clip my toe nails, & that I liked kissing more than talking or going shopping...But, as much as we **knew about** one another going in, we didn't really come to **know** one another until we each made the commitment to make the other the most important person in our life....(until the kids

arrived)...As our relationship deepened we became more open to sharing what was in each other's heart & soul. ...all those things that make us who we truly are...Truly knowing another requires commitment.

We can come to better KNOW Jesus by making this same kind of commitment...First, by taking time to really get into the Gospels,...NOT just by reading them, but as we read them, to imagine that we are right there with Jesus' disciples, leaning on His every word, watching His every move, ...trying to understand what He is telling us about Himself & God the Father.& the Holy Spirit,...& hearing His call for us to pick up our cross & follow Him.

The second way we can truly come to KNOW Jesus is to PRAY,...As Bishop Matano told our Confirmation class Monday night,spend Person-to-Person (P2P) time with Jesus (**no texting or email**) ,...talk with Him just like you would a brother, or a close friend. Sometimes this means finding a quiet place away from any distractions...Maybe over a cup of coffee before the rest of the family wakes up, or walking along the canal, or in the car on the way to work...If you invite Jesus into this P2P time, He promised He would be there...Talk to Him. Tell Him what's on your heart – even though He already knows...Ask Him anything you want - but let it be a 2-way conversation... Be still & listen...He will speak to you in your thoughts & in your heart...important stuff. ... He wants you to know Him, & to trust Him. ...& to call on Him when you need Him, or when you just want to talk...Let Him love you...And during the busy times, when you can't get to a quiet place,...He will always be there....ready when you can find a second or a minute to talk...Like any relationship, the more P2P time we spend with Jesus...the better we will come to know him.

Once in a while, as I'm doing research for a homily, I come across a Bible verse or passage that gives me a different way to look at my homily's theme...In Phil 3:10, St. Paul wrote, "My aim is to know Jesus, to experience the power of His Resurrection." (*rpt*)...The power of His Resurrection..."...One of the greatest signs of God's power ever demonstrated... We humans don't have that kind of power,...but Paul says that this power IS available to us...& we can experience this power working in our life...when we truly know Jesus

We can KNOW the Lord Jesus Christ in a personal way bec He's not dead, He's alive...He was dead, but He rose again & is alive now & forever more...He's here with us. He's with us in this building in a special way through His real presence in the Eucharist...And when we come to truly know the living Jesus... P2P, ...in the Gospels., in our prayer...& in taking His Body & Blood into ourselves (that's as P2P as you can get), the Power of the Resurrection...the power of God...is available to us....And boy, we can use it...

None of us has the power on our own to do all the good that we know we should do, & to avoid all the bad we know we shouldn't do...We all struggle with that... But the Good News – as Paul discovered – is that we can have the power of the Resurrection...the same power God used to change death into life. ...We can have this power to fight off life's temptations, ...cope with life's problems,...face life's crises. Every day we can begin by praying like this: "Dear Jesus, I need You....I need Your power today to face this job that I'm going to that I can't stand...or I need Your power to deal with family trouble that's got me stumped...or I need Your power to keep me from making a bad decision."...The power of the Resurrection.

My friends, if a man walks into a dark room, he doesn't have enough electricity in his body to generate even a flicker of light... It would be foolish for him to stand in the dark & curse about not having the power to overcome the darkness...when all he has do is to just walk over to the wall & flip the switch, and the room will be filled with light...It would be just as foolish for us to face the dark times in our life with only our own meager power to get us through...God has given us a switch...The switch that will bring the power of the Resurrection - the power of God -

into our life,... is to know Jesus Christ, believe in Jesus Christ, trust Jesus Christ, ...turn to Jesus Christ...We know where the switch is...Let's never forget to use it. AMEN!