

*23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday 2017*

*Getting to know you, getting to know all about you  
Getting to like you, hoping that you'll like me  
Haven't you noticed, suddenly I'm bright and breezy  
Because of all the beautiful and new, things I'm learning about you  
Day by Day....*

*Wouldn't it be lovely if getting to know someone were that easy! We know that "getting to know someone" takes time, day by day, listening to and learning about the other. How many of your friends on Facebook do you think really "know" you or do you feel you really "know"?*

*My homily today is in two parts: "getting to know" and "getting to like". Let's begin with "getting to like". Sometimes when you get to know "all about" someone, you realize, you really don't like them. If "getting to know someone" takes time and effort, getting to like someone can be a real challenge, especially if your politics are different, if you don't seem to agree on anything. Within our own Catholic church, there are heated disagreements about theology and how we are called to live our faith authentically. Cafeteria catholic! Traditionalist! These conflicts/ disagreements within the church community have been going on since the beginning. It's not easy to "like" people whom we don't agree with. It's so much easier to like someone who thinks the way you do. In our present political climate where hatred has the upper hand, it's challenging to "like" the other. When I heard the decision to repeal the Dreamer's act, I was feeling more than "dislike". Thank God, that Paul's letter doesn't say, "Owe nothing to anyone except to "like" one another". Have you ever heard someone say, "I can love that person even if I don't like them! Meaning, I can acknowledge that someone loves them, just not me!"*

*In Matthew's gospel today, he is acknowledging that people don't always get along, don't agree, even offend each other. "If a brother or sister sins against you, don't tell the rest of the world but go to them directly. Don't speak behind their backs. Enter into a dialogue of understanding and forgiveness. But that person might be very stubborn and not be open, so bring in some "impartial" witnesses. And if the conflict can't be resolved, go the larger assembly, the church, the ecclesia. And if there is still no resolution, what? Treat that person like a tax-collector or gentile. HMM.*

*What does that mean? Matthew himself was a tax collector whom Jesus called and embraced. The Gentiles are the first to recognize Jesus as King in the infancy narratives. Looks like being treated like a gentile or tax collector doesn't mean being ostracized but rather "forgiven" at all costs.*

*Given our human nature, we're not going to "like" everyone, but we are called to love and forgive as Jesus himself did.*

*Part 2. Getting to know Jesus. I'm assuming that all of us here not only love Jesus but "like" Jesus. But how well do we "know" Jesus. Yes, we know all "about" Jesus. We know his titles, his parables, his story. But how well do we know Jesus as a person? How much time do we commit to speaking to him "as one friend speaks to another". A few weeks ago we heard Jesus ask the disciples the question "Who do you say that I am?" I love the way the French pose the question: Pour vous, qui suis-je. Or Who am I for you? Starting this Wednesday I'm offering a Jesus Seminar, thinking about, talking about Jesus using the books of the New Testament. It's just an opportunity to "get to know" Jesus in his humanity, opening ourselves to the person who lived, loved, laughed, got depressed and angry, suffered and experienced a painful death on the cross as a criminal. Jesus is so much more than the title we call him by. Son of God, Savior, Messiah.*

*In my life as a Jesuit, the best way I have come to know Jesus is through the imaginative prayer that is part of the Spiritual Exercises. In this kind of prayer, you put yourself in the scene with Jesus or Jesus puts himself in the scene with you. You see in your imagination how Jesus is acting, what he is saying and then you may hear him speaking directly to you, as one friend speaks to another. It's not just "where two or more are gathered in his name, he is with them. It's also when you open your mind and heart to me, I am there for you. Getting to know Jesus and letting him know you takes time and effort.*

*Getting to know you finished with the words, "day by day".. So  
Day by day, day by day, O dear lord three things I pray  
To see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, follow thee more nearly,  
Day by day.*