



EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

August 4, 2024

St. James Catholic Church

*3909 Harrison * Kansas City, Missouri 64110*

"Small enough to know your name, big enough to make a difference."

Reflection from Fr. Garry Richmeier

Scientists tell us that atoms are 99.99999999 percent empty space. Therefore, each one of us is 99.99999999 percent empty space. Of course when I look at a person, I don't see empty space. So what I'm seeing is an illusion. If I want to see the reality, the empty space, I need to look much closer with an electron microscope.

In a very real way, the same is true on a bigger level. We look at a person and we see the surface: male or female, tall or short, rich or poor, black or white, loud or quiet, etc. But we look a little closer by talking to them, and we see other things about them: democrat or republican, Catholic or Protestant, conservative or liberal, etc. If we choose to look a little closer by getting to know them better, we see other things about them: attentive or distracted, leader or follower, ego-centered or other-centered, listener or talker, open or biased, friend or enemy, etc. Most of the time we stop there in our examination of who/what a person is, and we make our judgments based on that view. But that is really an illusion also, like seeing something solid rather than the empty space of atoms. If we really want to see a person for who they are, we have to look even closer.

As a counselor I get the privilege of getting a very close look at people as they tell me who they are. And what do I see? I see individuals with the same dreams, hopes, traumas, wounds, fears, joys, successes, failures, and so on. In every person I see the same human story underneath the mere surface appearance. This experience has helped me to realize that most of what I see when I first look at a person is an illusion, which in turn helps me to trust that a deeper look at who the person is will reveal an individual much like me.

Our polarized, segregated society is sorely in need of our ability to look closer at each other. To look beyond the surface appearances, and beyond the labels we put on others with which we maintain our biases and prejudices. We need to look closely enough to see we are the same, that we are each the image and likeness of God. Only then will we see the reality of what and who we all are.