

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



THE MONSTRANCE THAT TOOK THE 'R' TRAIN...

Recently I read an article in the *Tablet* which is the Brooklyn Diocese's equivalent to our "Catholic New York." It is a very good religious newspaper with a lot of interesting stories. One story that caught my eye this past week was entitled, "Missing Monstrance Took 'R' Train." As it turned out, a monstrance was found on the 'R' train in Bay Ridge on Tuesday morning January 2nd. A monstrance is the vessel (usually golden and jeweled) that holds the Blessed Sacrament when it is exposed on the altar for solemn adoration.

Apparently, this Monstrance had been stolen from Saint Francis Church in Manhattan where it had been set upon the altar in preparation for exposition. A man was caught on tape snatching it away. A woman found the unique religious treasure on the subway at 95th Street and turned it into the office there.

The Monstrance was then brought to the MTA lost and found on 34th Street and Eighth Avenue, only a few blocks from where it was first pilfered. Since an alert had gone out on the *Tablet* Facebook page, someone saw it and called the priest at Saint Francis and he came right over and picked it up. The Monstrance is beautifully decorated and worth thousands of dollars so the priest, Father Andrew, was very happy to get it back.

I suppose all sorts of things are found on the subway-but a Monstrance? That must be a first! The person who stole it must not have been aware that while the Monstrance was valuable in itself, what it holds is really the most precious thing of all-the Holy Eucharist; the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ-something totally priceless.

Maybe the thief had second thoughts about what he had done and that is why he left it on the train. Or perhaps he might have reasoned that if he had tried to pawn the Monstrance, suspicions would have been aroused. Whatever the reason, thank God it was returned to the church safe and sound.

This story made me think about one of the great saints of the Church and one of the earliest Roman Martyrs-Saint Lawrence. Lawrence was a Deacon in the Church at Rome in the third century when there was great persecution of the Christians. The Emperor, a man named Valerian, came to Deacon Lawrence and ordered that he turn over to him all the treasures of the Church. He gave him just three days to do it.

Lawrence got to work. He sold the Church's vessels and gave the money to widows and to the sick. He distributed all the Church's property to the poor. On the third day, the Emperor commanded Lawrence to produce the treasure. Pointing to crowds of the poor, the crippled, blind and suffering people who were behind him, Lawrence said, "Here are the real treasures of the Church!"

Naturally, the Emperor was not amused and had Lawrence roasted on a huge barbecue grill. Despite the torture, he maintained his sense of humor saying to the executioners: "Turn me over-I'm done on this side!"

What are the true treasures of the Church? Certainly not golden Monstrances or Chalices, as nice as they are to look at! The true wealth of the Church lies in the Body of Christ. First of all, the eucharistic body that is contained in every church tabernacle across the world. And then secondly, the Body of Christ which is enfolded in the often distressing disguise of our poor brothers and sisters around us.

Once we become "interested" and devoted to Christ's Eucharistic Body, then it will be much easier to "see Him" in the mystical Body of Christ which is our neighbor. May this realization be the greatest treasure that we discover as we make our journey to the heavenly terminal.

Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome