

Well, watching the World Cup over the past month has brought back so many great memories from my own time playing soccer in grade school and junior high. And by the way I'm goin for Croatia in today's championship—gotta go for the underdog. I love soccer and so I played it all throughout my time in grade school up until my freshman year.

And one of the key principles our coaches always emphasized to us over the years was “fundamentals.” In fact, any good coach of every sport would say that a grasp of the fundamentals is so important for an athlete to succeed in a given sport. The fundamentals are the basic skills and foundational principles that are required for successful competition in a particular sport. In soccer, the fundamentals include dribbling, passing, knowing where your teammates are on the field, kicking, “pretending like you're hurt when you're really not in order to draw a penalty against the other team and get a free kick,” etc. But seriously, without a knowledge of the fundamentals of *any* sport, no athlete can expect to compete well and win.

Well in today's second reading, we have a beautiful summary of the “fundamentals of our Catholic faith,” if you will, from St. Paul in his

Letter to the Ephesians. In fact, one scriptural commentary calls this ancient hymn a “panoramic view of salvation that stretches from the past to the present and to the future.” For the sake of time, I’d like to focus on the first few verses within this beautiful hymn by St. Paul, which scholars explain follows the format of a Hebrew *berakah*, which is a prayer of blessing and praise to God in elevated language.

The opening verses of the hymn are: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens...*” Brothers and sisters, this one line is huge and so I want to just focus on this for the remainder of the homily. Just think about this for a second—the Lord is telling us through this one line that He has blessed us “*in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens...*”

What does this mean? *This means that everything we need, we have. And more specifically, this means that everything we ultimately need for our happiness, our holiness, and our salvation has already been given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church!* Brothers and sisters, so many times in our lives, whether it’s in our own suffering,

struggles against sin, or our ongoing pursuit of holiness, we can repeatedly plead with God saying: “Lord help me! Give me an answer! Lord show me the way! Lord, why don’t you do something!” In our suffering and struggles, we can think that God’s holding out on us or something—like He’s deliberately withholding some special, secret grace or gift that He hasn’t yet given to us or refuses to give to us.

When we feel like our prayers aren’t being answered or we’re not seeing progress in our growth in holiness, we can blame God and treat Him as if He’s our enemy who doesn’t care about us or He doesn’t want the best for us as if He’s so aloof and distant. And in the midst of all of this self-imposed spiritual stress and anxiety, our Heavenly Father, Who loves us more than we know, is just sitting there next to us, saying, “***My beloved child. I’ve already given you everything in my beloved Son. In Him, I have given you my very self.***”

Brothers and sisters, something is seriously wrong if we think to ourselves that God is somehow not enough for us. Something is wrong if we begin to believe that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, given to us in the Most Holy Eucharist, is somehow not enough for us. Only the Evil

one would desperately try to convince us that God is not enough for us—that we somehow need something else—something more, when in reality there is *absolutely nothing greater, nothing better, nothing more satisfying than God Himself.*

*The truth is that there is no greater gift than the gift of Jesus Himself!* In a certain sense, Christ the Son of God, *is* the answer to all of our prayers: *past, present, and future.* He *is* the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He *is* the cure for sin and death! He is our *perfect* comfort and strength in the midst of sorrow and pain, Who carries us on His shoulders and gives us hope for the future. He *is* the Divine Physician Who heals all wounds and lifts us up out of the darkness and into the light. He is the Divine Liberator who gives us true freedom, new life, and a deep and abiding inner peace and joy.

Brothers and sisters, in Christ and through His Catholic Church, God has already given us *everything!* *Everything we ultimately need* for our happiness, healing, holiness, and salvation has been poured out to us through Jesus, the Son of the Living God, Who in turn gave us His Church to bestow all the Heavenly gifts and graces that flow from Christ

and His victory over sin and death! *This reality goes to the heart of our Catholic faith*, which is an intimate, deep relationship with our Lord Jesus *in and through* His Catholic Church! *This* is fundamentals! This is like the “*fundamental* of fundamentals”!

So brothers and sisters, we have to rediscover the life-changing transformative gifts that our Heavenly Father has *already given to us in generous abundance!* *We have to get back to the basics, back to the fundamentals of encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ through prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, and the sacraments.*

How is our prayer life? Are we even making the time to be with our Lord Jesus in prayer? Do we frequent the Sacrament of Reconciliation, also known as Penance or Confession? Do we spend time with our Lord Jesus in Eucharistic Adoration, allowing him to help, heal, sanctify, and guide us in the midst of life’s challenges and crosses? If we want more peace, more healing, more joy, and more love in our life, then we have to get back to the fundamentals of our Catholic faith. In a few minutes on this altar, we will encounter the greatest gift ever given to us, the gift of our Savior, God Himself. As we worship and

receive Him in the Most Holy Eucharist, let us thank Him for all that He has already given to us and done for us, knowing that *in Him*, we have everything we need for our happiness, our holiness and our salvation.