Homily for 22nd Sunday 2015
August 30, 2015
Readings: Deut. 4:1-8, Ps. 15, Js. 1.17-2:27, Mk. 7:1-23
Places: St. Peter’s and Stella
Theme: How to make our hearts closer to Jesus?
Mood: Prayerful and reflective, encouraging

“This people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.” … Do you think that this phrase applies today to our world situation, to our country, and to our individual selves? … Yes. Nations and individuals sin from time to time, and in the process drift from an original and innocent closeness to God.

How might we individually draw closer to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to Jesus who is God –made-man, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, our spiritual mother and Mediatrix of humankind?

Because God is absolute mystery, we come to understand him and his ways primarily by the use of analogy. So, using analogy, how do you grow closer to any human being? … Think of someone with whom you enjoy a relationship that is close psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. … Relationship requires time spent together: speaking, listening, enjoying silence together. Sometimes, you may be relaxing together and at other times, you may be working together. Some moments might be spent with light-hearted laughter and other times in sharing deepest thoughts, feelings and concerns. The two of you probably experience a harmony of personality and spirituality.

Whatever works for you in successfully developing a deep relationship with some other person, also will work in developing a deep relationship with God, Jesus and Mary.

May I offer a few practical suggestions. When you wake up in the morning, and when you go to bed at night, do you say some formal prayers and whisper some personal words to God? … Do you bless yourself and say grace before meals? … Do you have pictures of Jesus and Mary on the walls of your home? Do you have a routine of reading God’s word in the Scriptures or reading from some daily devotional book? … When you are traveling to work or school, do you take a nano second to thank God for the gifts of nature as you pass by flowers, trees, our local 8th wonder of the natural world, or the power and beauty of the continuously flowing of the Niagara River, or when seeing the sun rise or the sun set? … More importantly do you pause to ponder, “what aspect of God’s personality is being revealed” in the personality of each person you meet? We are all made in God’s image; we all reveal God in some manner and to some degree. Most importantly, when you receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, are you in the habit of simply “being with, resting with, abiding in” Jesus? I hope you take a moment to ponder, delight in, grow with Jesus as you receive his divine life presented in the sacrament of his Body and Blood. Our Protestant friends value greatly, and rightly so, their emphasis on and experience of a “personal relationship with Jesus.” We Catholics experience that “personal relationship with Jesus” each time that we receive Jesus in the most personal and intimate manner through the
sacrament which we call the bread of heaven, the food of angels, the foretaste of eternal life, the sacrament of our Lord’s love for us.

“This people honors me with their lips but their hearts are far from me.” Let’s try to focus this week on drawing our hearts closer to Jesus ... in some of the same ways whereby we draw closer to other people.