



Father Danny Murphy is a retired Pastor from Brooklyn NY. A gifted man with a God given talent to inspire and God's gift to us at Holy Cross Church in Vero Beach Florida. This is just one of his inspirational homilies.

Fr. Danny Murphy – 6th Sunday of the Year 2019

What you are about to hear is a classic example of preaching to the choir. You are already on board with everything that I am going to be saying. I should be saying this to those who aren't on board, but – they're not here to hear it! So, what I am hoping for, please God, is that you and I will be able, in some way to preach and reach others so they may join us on board. Have you ever asked yourself this question: Why do I belong to the Catholic Church? Wouldn't it be easier to just belong to Jesus – to focus on love of God and love of neighbor without belonging to the Church? The fact that I was belonging to Jesus, but not belonging to his Church came about six weeks before my ordination to the priesthood. The rector of the seminary met with each of us who were about to be ordained. And to each of us, he asked he asked this one simple question: "Why do you want to become a priest?" My

answer was, "I want to become a priest because I love Jesus and because I want to tell as many people as I can, his message. I want to try to help people to love Jesus and to never be afraid of him." And I concluded my response by saying, "And I want to become a priest because I want to give my life to Jesus." The rector smiled and said, "That was a lovely speech, but you are not being ordained a priest to give your life to Jesus. You are being ordained a priest to give your life to the Church." Perhaps for the first time in my life, I realized that belonging to the Church, not only belonging to Jesus, was important. So, why do you and I belong, not only to Jesus, but also to his Church? Let's take a look at a few reasons. First, and foremost, we belong to the Church because Jesus wants us to. In the story in the Acts of the Apostles, we read that Saul was persecuting the Church. Then, on the road to Damascus, he is struck down and he hears a voice asking him: "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?" "Who are you, sir?" "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting!" Saul was not persecuting Jesus, he wasn't there. – he had died and was risen and had ascended into heaven. Saul was persecuting the Church. Jesus identifies himself with the Church – they're united, they're one. Just as you can't have a head without a body, you can't have a head, Jesus, without his body, the church – they go together! We belong to the Catholic Church because the Catholic Church has the Eucharist. No matter how well or poorly it is celebrated, we have the Eucharist. It affords us the awesome privilege of receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus. We belong to the Church because of one another. We are surrounded in the Church by heroes and heroines. I think of the sisters who taught me in elementary

school, the brothers who taught me in high school, the priests who taught me in the seminary and the priests in the parish where I grew up. I think of religious and lay missionaries around the world today; some of them fresh out of college, others in their third and fourth decade of spreading the message of our Lord, often living in danger, often living in poverty. I think of the many, many, many people who give so much to the Church, who work so hard for the Church because the Church is so important to them. We are surrounded and have been by such people. I belong to the Church because you belong to the Church. Your faith fortifies mine! Your goodness gives me goosebumps. Sure, there are times, perhaps many times when I may consider leaving the Church. Sure there are times, perhaps many times when I may be embarrassed by the Church. And, there are times, perhaps many times, when I see clearly the warts of the Church but you don't leave that to which you belong. Instead, you repair it, you renew it. So, you and I are on board, that we belong not only to Jesus, but also, we belong to his Church. So, how can you and I have other people join us, on board?