

In December of 1997, I was awarded Navy Air Crew wings. The whole process started 9 months earlier when with about 30 other Sailors and Marines, we began a program of water survival, where for a month or more we were plunked, dunked, dragged, inverted, submerged ... and just about any other sort of verb ... into water to ensure that no matter what might happen in the field, we would have the best chance of surviving what is officially called a “water landing” and what is more commonly known as a “ditch.”

The first part of the training stretched you physically – so that no matter how well you thought you could swim, you’d find out just where you might be lacking. The second part stretched us psychologically – simulating the experience of being a prisoner of war. The final part, which occurred in the field, stretched us mentally. You had to learn the location of every possible fire source on the aircraft, and how to disable it quickly. Add to that, how to fuel, prep, and start the aircraft; and the location of every piece of safety equipment on the plane.

An awful lot of work, which 12 and a half years later, seems almost like a dream. And sitting here ... listening ... may seem like an awful lot of useless trivia and war stories.

*“Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!”*

So says the speaker in our First reading for today. The actual word used in Hebrew means “*breath*” or “*vapor*.”

For those of you who remember the late ‘70s, and those of you into what is now called “retro” music, may remember the Kansas hit single from 1977 titled “*Dust in the Wind*.”

That song kind of sums up what I would think the writer of *Ecclesiastes* is talking about.

And the same might be said for the parable we heard in the Gospel.

The answer lies in St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians:

*"Seek what is above."*

Now, that's not just "Aim High" ... or some sort of motto. St. Paul explains to the Colossians, and to us in turn; that we need to:

*"Think of what is above, not of what is on earth."*

Which can be really difficult because we aren't in heaven just yet.

The trick here, is to realize that the corollary to "*All things are vanity!*" in the first reading is:

*"Christ is all and in all."*

And so the question for us is this: WHERE ARE WE?

If we are IN CHRIST, or as St. Paul puts it "*hidden with Christ in God*" we are assured that we "*will appear with [Christ] in glory.*"

But only in so much as we are IN CHRIST.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us first ask God to answer that question of us: WHERE ARE WE. And inasmuch as we need to HIDE OURSELVES WITH CHRIST IN GOD, let us ask Him for the graces to do JUST THAT.

Let us pray for the graces to move deeper and deeper WITH CHRIST IN GOD so that we may truly be the Sons and Daughters of God the Father, redeemed in Jesus Christ, and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.