

In the early 1990s, a popular culture parlor game arose which is called *Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon*. The premise was that a player had to start with any particular actor and through various roles connect that actor to the actor Kevin Bacon in six steps or less.

This came from the proposition that any two people on the planet are connected by at most six layers of acquaintances. In other words, I suppose “it really is a small world after all.”

The other day, while surfing Catholic web pages, I came across a blog titled *Six Degrees of John Paul II*. The author’s premise is the same. And the connections are fascinating.

What impressed me was the subtitle of the blog. The title, again, is *Six Degrees of John Paul II*; and the subtitle is: *Bloggging to help you become zero degrees from Jesus Christ*.

That is not a bad thing, after all, isn’t it?

In today’s reading we hear the end of the Genesis story of Jacob (also known as Israel) and his 12 sons which centers on his second youngest son Joseph ... who was sold into slavery and after many years saves his family when things all work out.

In today’s reading, things are so good, that Jacob - at a very advanced age, and all his family relocate to Egypt. After all, Joseph is practically in charge, and why not spread the wealth.

And that is what happens.

Yet, a generation or so later, in the beginning of the *Book of Exodus*, we hear:

*Then a new king, who knew nothing of Joseph, rose to power in Egypt.*

And then begins the story of Moses, and slavery, and bad stuff.

The Gospel today isn’t much better. Jesus tells His disciples what to expect. And it certainly ain’t a party. Arrests, beatings, hatred,

persecution ... and our Lord admonishes them, and us as well, to be shrewd, beware, don't worry, flee, endure.

And why is this?

My premise would be that the closer we get to Jesus in our lives ... or, to use the premise I began with ... the fewer degrees of separation between us and Jesus; well, then the more we start to walk in His footsteps which near the end led to His arrest, scourging, sentencing, execution, mocking, and death.

And if that were the end of the story, it most certainly wouldn't be "Good News."

But we know, and we believe, that although Jesus "*was crucified, died and was buried*" ... that He "*rose again on the third day*". And we know that "*If we have died with him ... we shall also live with him; ... if we persevere ... we shall also reign with him.*"

And so, may the graces of this Eucharist give us the graces of perseverance. That as we draw closer to Christ in our lives ... as we "*become zero degrees from Jesus*" ... may we endure with Him ... knowing that the closer we get to Christ, the closer we are to the Cross ... but also never forgetting in Faith that there is no resurrection without the Cross.