

Fourth Sunday of Lent

We Are the Body of Christ

March 22, 2020

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Christ heals the blind man by touch, by using his own saliva as a healing balm. We are called to imitate Christ, but we are told that we can't touch one another. And it is killing us. Killing us not to be able to visit our sick in hospitals, our elderly in nursing homes. I am always amazed at home families rally round when someone is hospitalized. Family members draw near from near and far, even those long estranged have been known to come and find their own healing. Its not unheard of for parents and spouses to sleep in a chair in the room or in the visitor's lounge down the hall to remain near a loved one who is sick and otherwise alone. But we cannot do that. Its killing us to not be able to do what might literally kill us or others if we get infected from those we long to be able to care for.

But we can be telepresent—present from a distance, like the telephone is voice from a distance, or television, sight from a distance. Its common to bemoan the rise of social media. Its common to lament the popularity of video games and internet streaming services. We use them, but too often we also feel guilty about using them, or even more often we complain about how much others seem to be using them, because we fear they are becoming a substitute for face-to-face relationships, from bodily touch. But today that is their strength. They can keep us connected when we need to be physically apart. They are no substitute for physical presence, but they can enhance our relationships when physical presence is impossible. And so we are called to stay in touch even if we cannot reach out with a hug or a kiss.

We need one another now more than ever. And that is no evil. Now some of us have more darkness in our lives to deal with than others. That in itself can darken our vision, if we dwell upon it. But as we intone at the Easter vigil, Christ is our light. And our faith in Christ can inspire us to become light for others, even if we have to shine our light from a distance, more like a flashlight perhaps than a cozy fire in the living room fireplace. We may need to communicate our warmth telepresently through a screen rather than physically through a hug or a kiss. But we are called to stay in touch. I have quoted this saying from Teresa of Avila many times. That in our world, two thousand years after the physical presence of Christ on the earth, we are called to be Christ's hands and feet, we must become the body of Christ. Well during these next few weeks and months our media devices must become our hands and feet.

We must brainstorm ways to use our tools to extend our eyes and ears, even our hands and feet, that we might yet be telepresently, and mystically, the body of Christ to the vulnerable and the suffering around us.

And so I want to end with a proposal I have brainstormed. I would invite each of you to take a look at our parish directory, its available online on our website if you cannot put your hands on a physical copy. I invite you to look at our directory and to call or otherwise contact across

cyberspace the two people immediately below you on the list. And the last two on the contact sheet to loop back up and contact the first two, so that each of us will reach out to two others, and two others will reach out to you, at least a couple of times a week, to check in on you and for you to check in on them to see if they need help, if their situation has changed, which as we are learning can happen overnight. We are the body of Christ, and we do not want any wound or bruise to go overlooked and untended.

In this uncertain and anxious time Christ is our light. May we bring Christ's light to one another. Since we cannot share the body of Christ with one another today in the Eucharist, we are going to have to become the body of Christ ourselves.