

13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, 27 June 2021

Scriptures: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24; 2Corinthians 8:7,9,13-15;  
Mark 5:21-43

Homily: Fr. Ken

Until the onslaught of the coronavirus pandemic, nearly every year we sent a delegation of St. Rita parishioners to visit our various educational and health projects in Guatemala. The delegation ranged in age from 13 to 83. They would spend from ten days to two weeks visiting the schools we support, the hospital, and other project sites. At various opportune moments, and at the conclusion of the delegation's trip, we would all reflect on our genuine immersion experience.

If there is one word that could epitomize our collective experiences, it would be to say that each one of us was touched by the personal lives of the Guatemalan children, students, teachers, parents, and others we met. It was very much a touching experience. Our hearts and minds were truly touched by their lives.

Being touched by the lives of others is precisely the very theme of this weekend's Gospel.

Jesus offers us two stories of healing and new life, through faith. In both cases touching plays a central role. First, Jairus, the synagogue official, asks Jesus to come and to lay his hands on his little girl to make her better and save her life. Interestingly, within the multitude of traditions and religious practices of the Old Testament, there is no custom of laying on of hands. But it became a practice used throughout the early Church and taken over by Christians who would lay their hands on those suffering from diseases. In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the priest lays his hands in silence on the sick person before he places the sacred oil on the person's head and hands.

The second Gospel story is that of the woman suffering from a hemorrhage. She knows she must touch Jesus in order to be healed, even though such an act according to Jewish law will render him unclean because of her condition. Jesus nevertheless commends her faith, a faith that has enabled her to put her trust in him, and go beyond the accepted boundaries of convention.

What is it that Jesus is teaching us? We are taught two challenges. First, to receive life from Jesus. Second, to convey his gift of life to others.

We are invited to be touched by him, and to remain in touch with him. Without his love in our hearts, we are not fully alive, and we are certainly not able to offer that love to others.

Our hearts and minds are touched as we listen to his word during the Liturgy, and we are nourished spiritually as we receive the gift of his body and blood in Communion.

As we exchange peace, our spiritual embracing of each other reminds us that we are the body of Christ, literally in touch with each other. By the simple act of a handshake or a reverent bow toward one another, we proclaim the peace that exists between us.

We acknowledge, too, that this peace is also his gift, flowing from the risen Lord who awaits us in Communion. These same acts flow out into our lives. The very way we greet each other, the way we smile, the way we listen, the way we hold each other in friendship or compassion, are all carrying out the love of Christ and our witness to him.

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