

The Body of Christ started with an infant. And yet it did not end there, as Christ continues to become incarnate in every infant conceived. The March for Life, which took place this past Friday, is a march for Christ incarnate – regardless of how one may choose, there is Christ in each life. That is the meaning of, *“there are many parts, but one Body.”*

“If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it” wrote St. Paul. When the child cries in the womb for life, we, too, cry, as he/she is part of who we are and is integral to what we shall become. When our brother or sister in Haiti suffers, we all suffer as one people. In a sense, when our parishioners journey to Haiti, we are saying we are one with you, even in your suffering.

And likewise, if one part is *honored*, all the parts share in that joy. +A couple weeks ago, my niece called with great excitement to tell me that she had become engaged. She didn't stop with me, but called everyone she could think of to share in the joy. And in July, all of those friends and family will come together as Church, in this Cathedral, to *honor* that love that originated in Christ.

Haitian or American, people of all colors, gay or straight, old or young, within each, there is Christ to be *honored* by all. It is his Body in that nursing home, his Body in that prison, his Body in that womb and in the person sitting next you is his Body – many parts, one Body.

Every one of us is sacred, simply because God gave us life. Within each of us is a message from God to be shared and connected into that one Body. As St. Paul put it, *“God placed the parts, each one of them, in the Body as he intended.”* Each one of us is intended for a purpose, one piece of the puzzle to be matched to another. This child here (pointing) may well be the one piece that finds a cure for cancer.

+The other day we had a group of parishioners stuffing envelopes that were to be sent out to Cathedral parishioners. Kim Kremer, our office manager, told me that after a couple hours, she noticed that a number of them had blood on them and had to be re-printed. Yes, they had cut their fingers and continued without ceasing. Yes, that is the Body of Christ, coming together as one, shedding his very blood!

Looking around, it is obvious that what makes a Church is not because the people who make it up are all emotionally and ideologically compatible. No, it means to stand shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand precisely with people who are very different from us, held together in our one belief in Jesus Christ. Church is what transcends our differences, to become one community of faith beyond race, ideology, gender, language and background.

What does it mean to be Catholic? Jesus said, *“In my Father's House there are many rooms...”* It means to be universal, because opposite Catholic is a fundamentalist's *one room*. We stand together with our differences (our rooms) to be one in faith, one baptism and one in God.

While some roles may carry more responsibility, they are to *never* carry more privilege. For example, our mentally ill have the same right to be here. The baby crying has a right to cry.

The elderly, with their wisdom, matter to the direction of the Body. The youth matter as their energy and vitality renews the Body.

+On a number of occasions I have walked into our office to find one of our mentally ill (not all are dangerous), often homeless or from a group home, sitting around sipping coffee. The Body of Christ should always be a place where people can come and sip coffee, no matter who they are.

Why do people stay (or leave) in the Church? Oh, the music and preaching is important and a prayerful environment is central, but the answer is often because of those sitting next to them.

When you come to know (or tolerate) those around you, there is the opportunity to more fully *experience Christ's presence*. And likewise, if we fail to get to know those around us, we fail to know Christ in some way.

True, in some we find that Christ can have a rather grumpy side to him! Yes, sometimes we have to look a bit *deeper in some to see him*.

Do you know the people sitting around you from week to week? Perhaps you are where you are for a reason? You can be the difference between them staying or leaving, by welcoming or ignoring. Baptized into the one Body, means all of us are obligated to be mutually accountable to each other and to this end, Christ Himself.

When one is not here, it affects all of us, for part of the Body is missing. It would not be the same without N._____ greeting. N._____’s laugh... All of you could add the names you know, as well. Many here I do not know your names, but I do sense when you are *present* and when you are not.

Have you ever noticed how the church can have a different feel to it from one Sunday to the next? It often originates in the *individuals who are present*, who are connected deeply (or shallow) into the Body of Christ.

+We had an ordination last Saturday and it took two hours to complete. Imagine some people’s reaction if I said we will be here for two hours! We’d be taking you out in stretchers! But from start to finish, there was tremendous enthusiasm - because this is what each individual brought into the church that day. You can make all the difference in the world in making Christ present in how you are *present*.

We do not go to church so that we can be alone in our suffering and in our joys – Can you imagine if my niece had no one to share in her joy? Can you imagine if one you loved died, and you had no one to embrace you? No, we go to church precisely because God said that it is not good to be alone.

+I have two horses back home and they are held in a pasture surrounded by just three rows of wire. It is all that holds them in and in twenty years or more that was always the case until one day, I decided to separate them, as I had to do some work on one of their hooves inside a big

packing shed. I heard the other cry out and the next thing I know, the other one was galloping in the shed standing next to the one I had taken out. She had simply jumped the fence and come in. I have never separated them since that day and the other has never jumped the fence since that day.

Isn't that a good analogy to Church? We step over all that separates us to be together. It is in our nature to be with the other. Our search for God must be consistent with our nature, which is to walk together to God. I ask you, "*Can you imagine any saint apart from his/her Church?*"

We all walk together, as *one Body*.