

13th B June 28, 2015

During Holy Mass, you look to the altar and the pulpit, but also I'm sure out the window at the trees, the sky, the rain, and the geese who have registered at our parish. During Holy Mass, I look to you and up to heaven, but also at our back doors. Not so much who leaves early, but at who chooses to come in to St. Bernadette.

Are our doors too wide: it doesn't matter what you think, how you act, what you believe? Or, are our doors too narrow? Are we an exclusive club for the spiritual All-Stars? ("Thank God we're not like the rest of the misfits out there!")

How good do you have to be, how Catholic do you have to be to find a home at a Catholic church? Are those glass doors too wide? Or not wide enough? For that matter, do you or I belong here?

Consider this woman with the continual flow of blood. She is not only fatigued. According to the Law of Moses, she was ritually impure—not permitted to attend Sabbath worship, never to step foot in the synagogue or temple. Not just once a month, not just after giving birth: her discharge of blood closed the door of Jewish worship to her permanently. According to the Law of Moses, no one could touch her—including her husband.

I wonder if there are Catholics or inquirers who feel that way about the Church, who fear the doors are too narrow for them, that they are "untouchable": perhaps the obviously poor or homeless; the divorced and remarried; the gay and lesbian; the active addict; a woman who's had an abortion; a thoughtful person who just doesn't buy some Catholic teachings.

This desperate, bleeding woman pushes through the crowd and touches the garment of Jesus. A lot of people bumped into Jesus that day, but she touched his cloak; and she had the faith that Jesus could help her. And I suppose at Mass, lots of us “bump into” Jesus, especially at Communion. But how many of us really try to touch him because we know he can heal and save us?

She was a wounded, hurting person whom the religious authorities feared, judged, and avoided. They didn't bother to look into her heart. But Jesus loved her, and wanted life for her.

And isn't that what we really want on Sunday morning—that we will touch Jesus and he will love us into life? And isn't that the job of a parish—to love people into life, whoever they are, wherever they've been, wherever they are bleeding? Perhaps we could ask Jesus to do that for us too, right now.