

Pentecost Homily
May 24th, 2015

These past six months in our church year have been quite a journey – a journey which records the landmark events in the life of Jesus. It's the story of the central mystery of Christianity – the story of the incarnation. We have celebrated this remarkable story for over 2000 years now.

We think of the incarnation, most of us think of it this way: God walked on this earth, physically, for thirty-three years, he died, and he rose. When he left, he sent the Holy Spirit to be present among us – but the actual physical body of Jesus was gone forever.

Jesus was here on earth healing, teaching, and revealing God in all of God's compassion and love for 33 years. But he is not actually here anymore. The incarnation – that time when God was physically present and walked among us is over. And while the Holy Spirit is real – the Spirit is not the actual physical presence of God. There is a lovely little story that you've probably heard before, about a child who woke up one night after a frightening nightmare. She was convinced that there were all kinds of

monsters and goblins under her bed and in the corners of her room. She ran to her parents' bedroom and after her mother had calmed her down, she took the child back to her own room and said, "You don't need to be afraid, you aren't alone here. God is right here with you in your room." The little girl said, "I know that God is here but I need someone in my room that has some skin on!"

We all need a God who has some skin on. We need God to be present here and now, in the flesh, in 2015 – right here in Ottawa – someone we can heard and touch and see.

Most of us don't find God in some obscure setting – like a remote mountain monastery. Most of us need to find God in the kitchen, in the backyard, in the parking lot, and on the phone. We need God to hold us when we are discouraged. We need God to give us a gentle kick in the butt when we ignore someone in need. We need a God with some skin.

Ronald Rolheiser, in his book – *The Holy Longing* – suggests that our limited understanding of the incarnation is what makes it so hard for us to find that real, live, physically present God in our

lives today. He notes that our rather short-sighted perspective gives the impression that the incarnation was a thirty-three year experiment; a one-shot excursion by God into human history...and now – it's over.

The incarnation is still going on – it's just as physically real today as it was when Jesus walked the dusty roads of Palestine.

When the Holy Spirit came to fill up those believers on that very first Pentecost – God once again took flesh. God got some skin. But in another way, through the Holy Spirit, God took flesh once again – and ever since, God has been sending us the Holy Spirit for that same reason. By giving us the Holy Spirit, God awakens in each of us the gifts that God needs to continue to be here and present in our world.

That first Pentecost, God became dependent upon human beings in a whole new way – and God has been dependent on us ever since.

The season of Pentecost has arrived. It's sometimes called the Season of Ordinary Time – it's that long six months or so when

nothing too exciting happens in the liturgical calendar, when the vestments are always green. It lasts until the Season of Advent arrives. Pentecost is perhaps the most important season of the church year – because it's the season when we are reminded once again that we can be renewed in the Body of Christ and continue to make sure that God has skin. It's the season when we are called to specifically allow those gifts with which God has blessed us, to be used so that those who need God in their lives – a real, physical God – will be able to find that God. Jesus did it 2000 years ago – but now God is depending on us to do it.

St. Teresa of Avila captured it so well when she wrote:

Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands but yours,
No feet but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which
Christ's compassion must look out on the world.
Yours are the feet with which
He is to go about doing good.
Yours are the hands with which
He is to Bless now.

During this Season of Pentecost – what are each of us going to do to ensure that the incarnation continues to live on in us as the Body of Christ – so that all those in our communities, who are so in need of God’s unconditional love, will be able to find it.

A God...who will hold them when they need to be held, who will fix a leaky faucet for a cup of coffee, who will comfort and reassure them when they are afraid, who will act in solidarity with them over the offences of residential schools and join in prayer for reconciliation.

A God...who will laugh with them when they are delighted, who will run an errand for them when they are homebound, who will pick up the phone to let someone know that they are being thought of, who will mourn with them when they grieve,

A God...who will house them when they are homeless, feed them when they are hungry, and visit them when they are in prison, who will sit silently with them when they simply need a quiet companion by their side.

What are our gifts from the Spirit?

Are we ready – to allow God to use them during this season of Ordinary Time?