

sent to: Sister Dorothy Marie
2/15/75

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The Parish Mission of St. John Brebuf

THEME: Lord, that I may see!
or Getting to Know Jesus

In the Constitution on the Liturgy, it states:

"To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister... but especially under the Eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes. He is present in His word since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

This Parish Mission is a joint search for the meaning of Jesus in each of our lives. We must find Jesus now in this year of 1975 - with its economic uncertainties, its latent unrest, its questioning, its restlessness on the part of so many who profess a faith in the Lord Jesus.

Where is the Lord Jesus? How do we see Him? We must look each evening during the parish mission for the answer to that question. In discovering that answer, so many other answers are given that relate to our practical lives here and now.

The search for Jesus is the basis for each of the week-night liturgies. Where is Jesus?

Monday - In His Church

Tuesday - In the Sacrifice of the Mass

Wednesday - In His Word

Thursday - In the community who are gathered together in His name
and finally we ask on Friday:

Friday - Now that we've found him, what do we do?

March 8th and 9th, 1975
St. John Brebuf
Mission

SUNDAY HOMILY

From the beginning of time, man has sought various ways in which he could come in contact with God. Primitive man would strike pieces of wood against each other, and the resulting fire would be a sign of a powerful God's presence. Man would look to the heavens and see and hear the lightning and thunder and become very conscious of a God who spoke a message of wrath. Mountain peaks would be considered the dwelling place of the gods - and their message to men would take diverse forms of rain and snow, harvests and famine, war and peace. But despite all these interpretations of a God who spoke to men, men would still wait and be anxious to hear the voice of God, the words spoken by God.

In the Christian tradition we realize that we don't have to look at natural phenomena or human events to hear the word of God. God HAS SPOKEN. But God has spoken only one word. That one word is enough; no more need be said. That one word spoken by God as Father is Jesus. Jesus, in turn, speaks many words, performs many actions, leaves a means whereby those words and actions would be continued in His Church. Unlike ancient or primitive man, you and I do not have to resort to mythology or natural signs and wonders to hear the voice of God. God has spoken. He has spoken ONE WORD and that word is Jesus.

The whole life of a Christian, and we as Roman Catholics, is to develop the ability to hear that Word and to see the various ways in which that Word becomes incarnate, the ways in which it takes on flesh. In a sense, the life of the Christian is a searching experience, an attempt on each of our parts as individuals and together as a community to be in touch with God.

In the Sistine Chapel in Rome, there is a beautiful fresco by Michaelangelo which describes the creation of man. God is at the center of the fresco and is portrayed as a powerful man stretching forth his hand and fingertips to the figure below. The figure below is man who lies on the ground and in turn stretches forth his hand upward to be in touch with God. The fresco allows a small distance to separate man from the touch of God, yet it portrays man's search, man's longing, man's seeking to be in contact with the divine.

In any of the searching experiences that are part of human life, there is a tremendous amount of work and effort. This applies to almost every object of man's searching experiences. These can range from the panic which sets in a house looking for more "D" batteries to keep a toy operating and your child amused to the enormous effort expended in searching parties for lost children or misguided travelers in forsaken parts of our country. The searching experience can be a long fruitless process or be successful almost immediately. So much depends on the clues which are there to lead us to the object of our search; so much depends on how close or far away we are from what we are searching; so much depends on the energy expended.

The parish of St. John Brebuf begins a search this week in an experience called a Parish Mission. Each weeknight from Monday to Friday, all of you are invited to join in a common search for the Word spoken by the Father, the Word which takes the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each evening at 7:30 P.M., this entire parish community is asked to come here to this Church, to worship together, to pray together, to search together for the Lord Jesus.

For some, the search for Jesus will be ended quickly. They are close to him now and need only to become more aware of his presence around us; for others, the search for Jesus will be a longer process because we have kept him at a distance. Perhaps we have done what he has asked, but more out of a sense of obligation than a sense of personal relationship. For still others, this search will be real and most important because it will be a search in faith to discover the Word spoken by the Father.

No matter how short or long the search may be, each of us is invited to join in it. We emphasize the theme of this mission as a search for Jesus because Jesus is at the heart of our Christian faith. So many dimensions of our religion - the Church itself, the sacraments, the Scriptures, the very parish of which we are a part - make sense only in the context of an understanding of this one Word spoken by the Father, the Word JESUS.

Our search for Jesus has the advantage of looking at Jesus through 2000 years of faith, and the vision is true: he is the Risen One, the eternal Son of God, the Word spoken by the Father. But Jesus is more than a historical figure; he is a person alive and well today.

2000 years ago, when men looked at Jesus they did not say to themselves, "This is God: I want to see how God acts." Rather, they saw a man who made them realize the dignity of their own humanity. They saw a man free enough to say what he believed and courageous enough to take the consequences; a man on fire with dedication, yet often frustrated; a man who sometimes went hungry and sometimes dined with the rich; a man who amazed crowds, yet lost his own followers. Some said, "Never did anyone speak like this man." Others said, "We will die for you." And still others said, "If we do not kill this man, he will pervert the entire nation."

We need to search for Jesus, for when we find him we will understand that it is good to be a human being, and that we can reach the divine only by plumbing the depths of our humanity. He showed us how good and joyous life can be here and now in this world - with its inflation, unemployment, its pains and sorrows, its wars and rumours of war.

Who is our model in our search for Jesus? What example do we have of others who have searched for Jesus? Perhaps all we have to do is to recall the words of today's Gospel.

In the Gospel today, we meet a man born blind whom Jesus cured. After Jesus had rubbed the blind man's eyes with mud, he told the man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. As a result of this washing with water, the blind man was able to see. This event made it possible for the blind man to literally see Jesus. The same is true for each of us as a result of the washing we received in Baptism.

But immediately after the cure of the blind man, people began to ask him how it happened. Who did it for him? Who worked this miracle? At first, the response of the cured blind man was general and gradually became more precise. He would refer to Jesus as a prophet and eventually acknowledge him as the Son of Man, as the Messiah. And all the while that this once blind nameless man is coming gradually to the awareness of finding Jesus, others in the crowd sat back and refused to search, to understand to seek, to pursue an understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ. These are Pharisees who would continue to go through the observance of the law, the fulfillment of prescriptions, the ever increasing hardness of heart.

Where would we be if we were present at that event? Would we come gradually to believe in the Lord Jesus or would we remain stubborn in the hardness of our hearts.

The cry of the Christian today must be: LORD THAT I MAY SEE! In the midst of all this darkness, let there be light; in the midst of the uncertainty of our culture and our age, let there be beacons which show us a direction; in the unchartered experience of life, let there be a guide. LORD THAT I MAY SEE. This is the cry of faith.

Perhaps this cry is best expressed in a scene from a Broadway play which describes the fantastic event which happened to a young girl named Helen Keller. The play is THE MIRACLE WORKER.

ANNIE: All right, pump
(Helen touches her cheek, waits uncertainly)
No she's not here, PUMP!

She forces Helen's hand to work the handle, then lets go. And Helen obeys. She pumps till the water comes. Then Annie puts the pitcher in her other hand, and guides it under the spout, and the water tumbling half into and half around the pitcher douses Helen's hand. Annie takes over the handle to keep water coming and does automatically what she has done so many times before. She speaks into Helen's free palm:

WATER, W-A-T-E-R, WATER, IT HAS A NAME.

And now the miracle happens. Helen drops the pitcher on the slab under the spout. It shatters. She stands transfixed. Annie freezes on the pump handle; there is a change in the sundown light and with it a change in Helen's face, some light coming into it we have never seen there before, some struggle in the depths behind it.

and her lips tremble, trying to remember something the muscles around them once knew. Till at last it finds its way out painfully, a baby sound buried under the debris of years of numbness.

HELEN: AWH-WAH
(And again with great difficulty)
WAH-WAH

Helen plunges her hand into the dwindling water, spells into her own palm. Then she gropes frantically, Annie reaches for her hand and Helen spells into Annie's hand.

ANNIE: (Whispering) YES
(Helen spells into it again)
YES
(Helen grabs at the handle, pumps for more water, plunges her hand into its spurt and grabs Annie;s to spell it again)

YES, OH MY DEAR YES.

The play comes to a quick conclusion with the young Helen searching for every object in her reach and asking to understand it.

In a sense, we are like that young Helen Keller searching, looking for meaning in our lives. The search for each of us - young old, single, married, priest, nun - is a search for Jesus.

I invite you to come each evening this week to lend your resources, your prayers, your faith in our common search for Jesus and the meaning that he gives to our lives today.

In the beginning of time, man sought for various ways to be in touch with God. Fire, rain, thunder would become the gods of ancient men. But you and I have the opportunity to hear the word of God, a word spoken by God, one word - one word, no more need be said, that was enough and the Word is Jesus. It's fantastic, exciting, remarkable tremendous experience - and it can be yours and mine this week.

St. John Brebuf
Monday, March 10, 1975

THE SEARCH FOR JESUS

A search for anything or anyone involves many factors. We have to know for whom we are looking, whom we are seeking. This week here at St. John Brebuf, the object of our search is clear: it is the Lord Jesus, the Word spoken by the Father. Where do we find Jesus? Are there any clues around which would help us in our search?

For most of us from childhood, the answer to these questions is simple. Jesus is an historical figure who lived for a period of 33 years. At the end of His life, he underwent the Passion and Death we are familiar with, and eventually rose from the dead which proved that he really was the Son of God. He stayed with his followers for approximately 40 days, at the end of which he ascended to His Father in heaven. However, for the last 2000 years, Jesus has remained with us, especially in the Eucharist when we have the opportunity to meet him in a personal way. Consequently, for many of us, when we ask the question, where is Jesus? - our response could well be restricted to this encounter we have with Jesus in Holy Communion.

But Jesus is present in other ways, in other situations, in other circumstances beyond the Eucharist. Let us begin our search for these ways, these situations, these circumstances where we can locate Jesus here and now.

When Jesus walked this earth, he must have realized that his existence as a human being on this earth would be restricted by a certain number of days and years. Consequently, he would take His apostles aside and commission them to continue his presence through a Church. He would say to Peter: "Thou art Peter, a rock, and upon this rock I will build my Church." Later, he would tell his followers: "I will be with you all days unto the consummation of the world." His last words to His disciples when he ascended to His Father were: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

The very Church which Christ founded, in which Christ has been present for 2000 years, describes itself as a Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head and we are the members. The presence of Christ in the Church has been an accepted reality of our faith for centuries. Its proof is in the very history of the Church where time and time again, Christ's presence has kept the Church alive despite our human failings and weaknesses. It would seem no organization such as the Church could have survived for even a hundred years without the presence of the Lord Jesus.

2.

Our search for Jesus should begin by looking for Him in the very Church which continues his presence in time. But what is the Church?

The Church is many experiences in all of our lives. It's your First Communion and many times afterwards burying your face in your hands while sharing with Christ. It's six candles flickering around your grandmother's or parents casket. It's a dark confessional where you told your innocent "disobeying" and later what really troubled your conscience. It's quiet and nothing moving in the sanctuary but a little flame behind red glass. It's the kiss of peace with real warmth from someone you've never met before, and people standing around talking after Mass. It's the conviction that something worth celebrating is afoot in the universe. It's Sister Margaret Mary making you memorize the seven spiritual and corporal works of mercy. It's Father Alexander preaching too long about Catholic education while you study stain-glassed windows. It's seeing Pope Paul on TV giving a blessing to thousands in St. Peter's Square. It's the ballast that keeps you from capsizing when the doctor says "It's cancer."

The Church is all this to people, and it is more. For all the above describes our relationship to what we know is the Church. But if we are going to talk about the Church, we should be rather clear about what - rather who, we mean. And the fact is that whatever or whoever the Church is, it's everybody who belongs. Certainly, there must be a designated group of people who are leaders - the Holy Father and his fellow bishops. But if we are referring only to them when we say "the Church holds this or that" or "the Church is going to do that," then we're separating the Church into two parts: "the Church" over there, and we over here.

Remember the not-so-funny joke about the black man who complained to the Lord that he wasn't allowed to enter a certain Church? Jesus replied, "Don't worry about that, man - I've been trying to get in there for years and they won't take me either." The Church is not just people. It's people and Christ. Just as the Pope and the Bishops are not on one side and the rest of us on the other, so the Church is not a collection of people over here, with God and Christ "over there," "up there," or "out there." The Church IS A GATHERING TOGETHER OF HUMAN BEINGS AROUND ONE HUMAN BEING WHO IS REAL MAN ~~AND~~ AND TRUE GOD.

Our search for Jesus must begin right underneath our very noses. We have to look for Jesus in the very Church of which we are a part. And that is our problem and our glory. The problem is that our part of the Church sometimes looks more like a multiplication of Archie Bunkers than of Christ. The glory is that we are the Body of Christ, and we have the power and the call to show the face of Christ to the world, to let Christ speak in modern language through us. As Vatican II said: Christ is the light of the world, and his light must shine on the face of the Church. The Church is a sacrament, or living sign, of Christ.

"Come now," said the hard-headed realist, "this is all very romantic and idealistic, but it's stretching a point, isn't it? The Church isn't really Christ, is it? It just follows him, imitates him, talks about him. Right!"

WRONG!

We must come to the crucial question: Is the Church just a group of people following Christ the way Marxists follow Marx, weight-watchers follow Jean Nidetch, Indians revere Gandhi, and so forth?

The basic almost-too-much-to-grasp fact about the Church is that it is the Body of Christ, one living organism. He is the Head. (Obviously the head is part of the Body). There is one real and mysterious life in the whole, though each member is unique and responsible individual person.

The Church doesn't act for Christ; Christ acts in what the Church does, especially the great sacramental actions. The Church doesn't speak "for" Christ as, for example, a press agent speaks for a governor: Christ speaks through the Church.

We don't say the head is the same as the rest of the body; neither do we say it lives its own life. Head and Body act as one.

We've all heard this often enough, but we always have to try again to make it a reality. "I am the vine, you are the branches." "The Spirit will be with you and you will know him because he will live in you." "My Father and I will come and take up our residence in you." "You are my eyes, my hands, my feet."

The purpose of the Church - as a group and as individuals - is to make the Church VISIBLY alive in the world. "It is the function of the Church," says Vatican II, "led by the Holy Spirit, to make the Father and his incarnate Son present and in a sense visible."

Down the centuries God has prepared a People through ~~#####~~ individual people - prophets, priests, kings, promising them all the while a man who would be THE King, Prophet, and Priest - the Messiah. When he came, he was unbelievably more than man could ever have hoped for. He summed up in himself all the ideals and all the weaknesses of all men. But in this human form was the eternal God.

When the Word was made flesh, God came to his creatures in the only way they could humanly understand him - in human form. Man can "get" to his fellowman only what can be seen and heard, felt and tasted and smelled. That is the human condition. So God came to men in a way that was humanly understandable - visible, audible, touchable. And this human necessity continues to the end of time. Christ must continue to be visible, audible, touchable in the world today. He does this through his Church.

Our search for Jesus therefore gives us a gigantic glue. Perhaps we have been looking in the wrong places when we look for Jesus in the Church. Perhaps we have to look at ourselves and each other.

The Church is not just a worldwide organization. It's not just all the people who belong to Christ. It is for instance this particular Church at Corinth which Paul must reproach for its factionalism; it is St. Lawrence Parish in Flasher, North Dakota; it is St. John Brebuf parish in Niles, It is this Church, this people, you, me.

In the Gospel today, we heard about the character who asks for signs and wonders in order to believe in Christ. Well, the signs and wonders are still asked for by each of us in order to find Christ.

Three signs & wonders:

1. Because we are the Body of Christ, we have to realize our responsibility in making Christ visible, audible, touchable TODAY. Perhaps, our search for Christ must force us to knock down the walls in our own lives which prevent ourselves and others from seeing Christ alive and well here and now.
- the walls of anger, ignorance, hatred, prejudice, elitism.
2. We associate so many laws of the Church as human laws and fail to see these laws as challenges to the Christian. Whether they are marriage laws or laws which call for a high expectation to attend Mass or to fast and abstain, these laws should be seen as guidelines for us which outline the minimal response the Christian is asked to give. *the gospel message often was a real difficult hard to teach a word that we find it hard to do with the word of God & change?*
3. We are disturbed with change in the Church. Yet, we expect growth maturity and change in each of our selves. If there is not growth and change in us as human beings, we fail to mature. Likewise, the Church is a living organism which demands CHANGE. Perhaps it's our vision of the Church as a business corporation like IBM or General Motors which makes it so difficult for us to accept change in the Church. If we see the Church as a vital active organism with life within it, then change should not be the exception, but the very rule of life.

I want to find Jesus in the Church. But in doing so, I realize that I myself am the biggest reason why I do not find him within the Church and will not let others do the same. As a priest, when my anger or impatience or lack of knowledge turns people away, then I have prevented them from seeing Christ. When I refuse to understand the message in Matthew's Gospel that describes the Last Judgment in terms of seeing Christ among the poor, the homeless, the hungry, the naked, etc., then I have failed to recognize Christ.

Our search for Jesus demands a spiritual 20-20 vision. But it demands we don't begin with others but with ourselves, for each of us is the Church and we have to find him within ourselves in order to see him in others.

DARK AND COLD.....

GIDEON.

I would have plain men love me not just saints
What is it that you love in me, my Lord? These better men were saints or prophets. I am an ordinary man & *well perhaps that is your special attraction, you*

March 11, 1975
St. John Brebuf
Parish Mission
THE SEARCH FOR JESUS

IN THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

In the beautiful musical OLIVER, there is a poignant scene at the beginning of the play where the young orphan Oliver is walking through empty streets, eventually winding up in a dark cellar room. He has become an apprentice to of all people, a mortician. He becomes more and more aware of the fact that he is alone, that he does not even know his own parents. At the tender age of nine or ten, the loneliness of the adult human being suddenly is very real to him. He begins a plaintive song entitled "WHERE IS LOVE?" The song title itself is a valid one for it expresses the longing, the yearning of a young child for the experience which each of us needs so desperately as human beings. WHERE IS LOVE? For Christians, that same question could well be phrased by asking WHERE IS JESUS?

Where is love? Where is Jesus? In a very real sense of the word, both questions are the same for God is love and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in him. Our search for Jesus is in reality a search for love. We began our search last evening by looking for Jesus within the very Church of which we are a part. We discover rather quickly that the reason we sometimes can't find Jesus in the Church is that we ourselves prevent ourselves and others seeing him in us.

But Jesus would not restrict his presence to a complete dependence on you and me. Because so often we disappoint Him and do not reveal Him to a world that is desperately in need of him. Rather, Jesus would love the world to such an extent that he would not want to leave it. Jesus would want his presence continued beyond the parameters of 33 years, beyond the time and place elements of Galilee, Nazareth and Jerusalem. This is not an extraordinary situation with great men who have lived for their cause and fear for it when they must go.

Many human leaders have longed to survive at least in some symbolic way for the sake of their followers. Who has not heard how King Robert Bruce of Scotland commanded, when he was dying, that his heart should be encased in a great silver locket? He dreamed that thereafter, when his beloved Highlanders went galloping into battle, they would lift their eyes to that gleaming silver heart swinging from a lance tip, and would be inspired to great deeds for Scotland.

Count John of Bohemia left himself to his men in still another way, a way so grotesque, so gruesome it makes the modern man wince and shake his head. He gave orders that after his death his skin should be taken and treated and stretched to make a drum-head. He wanted to believe that even when he was dead, he would still be in the forefront of his troops, urging them with martial music to victory.

Robert Bruce of Scotland, Count John of Bohemia - these were only men, and they could leave only relics. But Jesus Christ was God and He could leave Himself. But He did not do it so suddenly, so abruptly as this. He not only first promised He would do it, and prepared His followers for it, but he proved He had the power to do it. Before Christ dared ask men to believe in His real and personal presence in the Blessed Sacrament. He knew He had to establish that He was God. As a matter of fact, the Christ of Holy Communion came into being only the night before he died as the last signature of His love. But this Last Supper was only the last bright stone on a flashing pyramid of miracles that he had already performed to show His Divine Power.

Where is Jesus? Jesus Himself would answer that question for us by offering us His own gift of Himself in Holy Communion, in the renewal of His presence through the Sacrifice of the Mass. But to see Jesus in Holy Communion, in the action of the Eucharist is difficult for many. In fact, in St. John's Gospel, when Christ told his followers he would give them his flesh to eat and His Blood to drink, the Gospel writer concludes the 6th chapter by saying that some found this to be a hard saying and they no longer walked with Him. This particular scene in the Gospel account is one of the most tragic portrayals of man's reaction of Jesus. He was trying to tell the people that he would remain with them, that He would offer them his very self - and they found this so very hard to believe and they walked no longer with him.

In a real sense of the word, that same situation exists today when we ask the question: WHERE IS JESUS? Our faith tells us that he is present in the Eucharist, in the Sacrifice of the Mass. But this is a hard saying, and we find it difficult to believe and comprehend. We are asked to utilize the spiritual gift of faith and look beyond the bread and wine and realize that the Lord Jesus IS present. But how does Jesus become present to us in the Eucharist? How is He present here this evening in the Sacrifice of the Mass?

The answer to these questions demands that we look at this gift of the Eucharist which Jesus left us. An understanding of the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass means we should look at the whole idea of the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass as the opportunity for each of us to experience a common union with Christ which in turn is the experience of a meal with Christ and the total community.

Meals play an important part in our lives. The food we eat nourishes us and gives us strength. But more importantly, we come together at meals with our family and friends.

Eating alone is a sad and depressing experience. Meals were meant to be shared. As we share the meat loaf or pass the butter, we talk over what happened during the day, Mealtime is a time of closeness - the everyday simple sign of unity among family and friends.

Meals had the same role in Jesus' life. In all the Gospels, we see him having meals with his friends. His Last Supper, just before His arrest, was the most important meal he shared with them. Taking bread and wine from the table, he said to them, "Do this in memory of me." He chose this communal act of sharing food as the perfect way of showing the unity that should exist among his followers.

The Eucharist is our finest celebration of Christian love and community. That's most apparent when we think of a Mass for a special occasion - on Christmas or at a graduation. Our family, friends, neighbors are with us as we all share the same peaceful moment. As we hear the heartening songs and words of the liturgy, together we renew our hope in the possibility of human community. And together we receive Christ, the source of our Christian life. As we receive His body and blood in the signs of bread and wine, we renew ourselves as a community and find hope and strength for the future.

All this may sound rather idealistic compared to what may actually happen to us each Sunday when we go to Mass. And many will ask, who are disenchanted with the Mass, "Why go to Mass and receive communion at all?"

We go to Mass to be the Visible Body of Christ coming together in oneness and charity.

We go to Mass to express what love we already have for each other, poor as it might be; we go to Mass to deepen our love of God and man.

We go to Mass a group of sinful people. We publicly confess to the world and to each other that the light of Christ has shone poorly on our collective and individual face.

It sounds all very good. Why doesn't it "look" that way on Sunday? Because we are an imperfect, limping lot of pilgrims. The road is long, there are lots of alluring sideshows, our bodies are sick and our souls are tired; even our friends sometimes hurt us.

What's the heart of it all then? It's a man called Jesus who is God and our faith in him.

But so many of us, and especially the young, will say! "That's fine, but I can love Christ on my own. In the Peace Corps, in true love and friendship, in quiet places, in silence, in laughter."

But the Christian body must sometimes act as a body. Sometimes they will come together to be, in their meal, the sign of the presence of Christ in his world, reaching out to all men. Love must bring people together or it is not love.

WHERE IS JESUS? He IS present in the Sacrifice of the Mass. But why should he even bother being present? The answer to that is God himself. God's very being is life. God's very being is love. God freely chooses to create persons with a capacity for eternal happiness with him; he offers a person to person relationship with all human persons. He really wants to be WITH US. He really wants us to be WITH HIM. He comes to us in our own flesh in order to serve us.

To be one with God is to be holy. Holiness is God's very life, his being, his love. There is no holiness but God's holiness. He gives it to us His Children. If God comes to us, we are holy. If we leave God, we become evil.

The word "sacrifice" comes from two Latin words which mean "to make holy" or "to do something holy." If only God is holy, and only God can make us holy, then only God can really offer sacrifice. He offers us his holiness. He permits us to enter into a relationship with him in a holy action in which we "do something holy."

This is what the Sacrifice of the Mass offers us - the opportunity to enter into an action which is holy and to meet Christ. But to do so, we have to enlarge our eyes of faith, we have to look at this very action in which we are involved this evening of taking bread and wine and, as a result of Christ's command, to exercise that act of faith whereby we realize that the answer to our question: WHERE IS JESUS, is right before our eyes - and each of us have the opportunity to meet him.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is a tremendous act of generosity on the part of God to each of us. It is the experience of giving to the utmost - for Jesus would give himself.

There is a children's story which describes what giving is all about and it goes like this:

THE GIVING TREE

God's gift to us in the Eucharist is much more generous than the Giving Tree in the children's story. For ~~###~~ Jesus remains whole and entire - and we are the ones who are given a tremendous gift in order that we might give to others.

In the musical OLIVER, the small boy sings: WHERE IS LOVE. We cry out WHERE IS JESUS? And the answer will be given in but a few moments here in this Church as we offer the Sacrifice of the Mass and look for Jesus to be present in our midst. And the amazing dimension of all this is that this just doesn't happen tonight or once in our lifetime; it happens every day.

Parish Mission
St. John Brebuf
March 12, 1975

THE SEARCH FOR JESUS IN HIS WORD

If there is one dimension of human experience which we take for granted, it is the ability to speak. Our speech, in a very true sense of the word, is our revelation of ourselves to others. Words are used by each of us to express our thoughts, our feelings, our hopes, our dreams. It is through our use of words that we tell others who we are.

From the beginning of life, man struggles to use his gift of speech to communicate. A child will go through the various stages of grunts and inaudible sounds until it is able to articulate vowels and consonants in such a way to produce a sound of "Mama" or "Daddy." On first hearing this sound and the fact that the child identifies the word with a person creates a whole sense of excitement for the parents and family. That same sense of excitement and wonder is experienced by teachers as they watch children begin to express their ideas and concepts in words. The young couple will say words such as "I love you" to each other and the words will reveal the total feeling each has for the other. The excitement of each of us as we go through life expressing words of joy or sorrow as events occur to ourselves and others. Words are the normal means of communications between persons.

God would also choose to communicate Himself to us by means of words. These words become the revelation by God to men. In fact, God would use men to communicate His word to us. God speaks through human agents who have written their thoughts into expressions of speech whereby we come to know God.

But speech and the person are so identified with each other that it is impossible to separate them. If we have a pattern of lying, then that very action ricochets back upon ourselves so that we could well be called "a liar." Our words reveal who and what we are. On the other hand, if we have a pattern of word-choices which are imbued with support, sympathy, strength, and honesty, then we looked upon as "honest men," "integral men," "strong men." So too with God.

God would choose to communicate himself to us by inspiring men to use our very language, imagery, poetry, drama to communicate His thought to us. God would choose to let human beings, the Gospel writers, concretize the life, actions, deed, and words of His Son and place all these happenings into a proclamation of the Good News. These words reveal Jesus. These words are Jesus. These words give us gigantic clues to our search of finding Jesus here and now in 1975.

We have looked for Jesus in the Church and realize that Jesus can be present within this structure if we would only let him be seen. We know that Jesus is present in the Eucharist because he would leave us this gift of His presence - and we only need the eyes of faith to appreciate this gift.

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But now we seek to find the presence of Jesus in the written word which he have called "the Scriptures." Scripture is the ultimate revelation by God to man. For God also speaks His word to man in so many other ways. God reveals himself to us through the events of history, through our own lives, through the lives of other persons; and in a more solemn way, through the teaching office of the Church, through the Sacred Liturgy, through the work of theologians and even through the literatures and ~~#####~~ philosophies that function out side the Bible.

One cannot look at history without realizing that God is speaking. The rise and fall of great nations, the wars, the economic crisis, the leadership of nations and kingdoms reveal to all of us so many dimensions of God's love and reminders to repentance.

Our own lives and the lives of others give us an insight into the tapped wisdom of the human Christian community. Personally, I will never forget the time when a small elderly Italian lady came up to me at my mother's wake and asked if my father was also dead. I replied that he was. She paused for a second, just grabbed my hand for a moment, and made the very insightful comment: "Well, that means you're no longer a kid to anyone." The way in which this statement was put, its kindness, its sensitivity, its concern, placed so many religious questions such as life and death and the term of life each of us has the opportunity to live in an entirely new perspective.

God speaks to us by means of literature. There is a fantastic short story which tells of a young man who has left home. It was during the late sixties and early seventies in a time of tremendous alienation. He wandered through the country for a few years - and as the time progressed, he became more and more aware of what he was missing - a family, a home, parents, brothers and sisters. He decided he would try coming home. He started hitch-hiking from the West Coast. By the time he got to Omaha, he sent a letter to his parents asking if he could come home. He didn't want to impose on them and he asked them if they would just place one white ribbon on a tree which the train went by on the final trek towards home. If the ribbon was there, he would come home. Otherwise, he would just keep on going. By the time he arrived in Cleveland, he realized he had enough money to take the train to Baltimore. Two stops before Baltimore was the small town where he grew up - a small farm in the rolling hills of Maryland. The train ran right on the edge of the farm. The young man got on the train and time passed slowly at first. As the train made its way into Maryland, he began to wonder "what if they didn't get my letter?" He was getting very anxious. A man had come to sit down in the seat next to him and as the train approached the turn on the edge of the small farm he knew as home, he asked the passenger next to him to switch seats with him. He closed his eyes and requested his fellow passenger to look for a tree right on the edge of a farm they were about to pass and to see if a white ribbon was on any of the branches. The train seemed to go slower than ever. The young man closed his eyes - hoping, praying, - and suddenly he realized they had made the turn. He poked the man next to him and asked excitedly: "Was there a white ribbon on the tree?"

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His fellow passenger replied, "The tree was filled with ribbons - on every branch."

Such stories as this reveal the word of God to express an experience of forgiveness which is emotionally and intellectually impressive.

But God also speaks in the human events which occur to us and each other every day of our lives. You only have to pick up the daily paper to read of events and people whose lives and stories are telling us so much.

Take the Sun-Times for this morning:

All these events are happening in the world and they are part of God's revelation to us. But these events are being announced to us through the formality of the larger sphere of language whereby God's word is spoken to us. The every-day occurrences in newspapers, short stories, meetings, etc. make so much sense when looked at in the perspective of the inspired scriptures.

Psalm 19 tells us: The heavens are telling the glory of God
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech, and night to
night declares knowledge.

So often in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, we find reproductions of our own actions played out by people whose names familiar to us from Bible story time in grade school.

SAUL, SAMUEL, AGAG

HOSEA, GOMER

But God's word is not only in the historical events of the Old Testament. His word becomes most real when it speaks the name of Jesus. And the name of Jesus is God's word in the four accounts that we have of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Each Gospel writer would proclaim this Good news in a unique fashion

- Matthew would present Jesus as the new Moses
 - Mark would show us a Jesus on a constant journey to Jerusalem
 - Luke would present a Jesus concerned with the universal salvation of all men.
 - John would give us a Jesus filled with philosophical comparisons.
- But each Gospel writer would speak the same word and that word is JESUS.

Where is Jesus? He is present in the Word spoken by God in Holy Scripture. We neglect to find him there at times because perhaps of the challenge offered to each of us of what a discovery of Jesus in Scripture could really mean. An awareness of Jesus in the words of Scripture could well prompt us to realize that Paul's words to the Corinthians to avoid fights and uncharitableness with one another could well be words to each of us today. How different our reaction would be to the words of Jesus when he preached the Beatitudes and really believed that we are meeting Jesus in these words when we hear them or read them.

The history of the world has revealed that words have been the cause for revelation. "Give me liberty or give me death" was the cry of our own American revolution. In our own times, a word such as WATERGATE symbolized almost the downfall of our republic.

Words change the course of human events. But there is the Word spoken by the Father - the word is Jesus. This word is spoken in human events, in news of the day, in literature, philosophy, theology. But the Word is spoken especially in the inspired writing which God prompted men to do - in his Scriptures.

Where is Jesus? He's all around us, but in a very special way in the words spoken by the Father to men such as Isaiah, Paul, Matthew, John and countless others. One does not have to take a time capsule to go back 2000 years to meet Jesus; one does not have to die and go to heaven to see Jesus; one does not only have the opportunity to meet Jesus in the Eucharist. The Word spoken by God is printed. It is in our own language. It is the story of prophets, kings, saints and sinners. It is also the story of Jesus.

It's amazing what happens to men and women when they look for Jesus in the words of Scripture. They actually discover him and they become martyrs and saints.

PARISH MISSION
St. John Brebuf
March 13, 1975

THE SEARCH FOR JESUS: IN THE COMMUNITY

WHERE IS JESUS? We have been asking that question all week. And the answer is becoming more obvious to us all the time. Jesus is present in the Church if we want him to be; Jesus is present in the Eucharist through the Sacrifice of the Mass because He wanted to make sure we would discover Him; Jesus is present in the Word of God announced in Scripture and the many other ways in which God reveals Himself to man through human events, literature, and other people.

But Jesus would also choose to be present in the very community of faith of those who believe in Him when we come together and worship. Yes, Jesus is present here at this moment not only in the word of Scripture that has been announced to us, not only in the institution which we call the Church, not only in the bread and wine that is to become His body and blood, but also in each of us as we come to celebrate a community activity as a parish family of St. John Brebuf.

We need, as human beings, the experience of community. The familiar statement that "No man is an island" rings true in each of our lives. We need to get together with our friends to share our experiences, usually that special moment like a birthday, a birth, a death, a concert, or the thousand and other human happenings in our lives. These are moments we remember.

As long as people have been civilized, they have ~~suffered~~^{shared} loneliness and sought community. And in communities, there were special times when everyone in the tribe, town or country drew closer in celebration.

Every four years the Greeks in Athens held their Olympic games. Contestants came from all the colonies and cities of Greece to compete. The games were open to everyone who had the skill - student, peasant, soldier, scholar or emperor. Anyone could compete and become a national hero. During the seven days of the games, there were feasts, entertainment, music and dancing, religious ceremonies. It was THE event for all of Greece. Everyone remembered it and talked about the fine athletes and their feats until the next Olympics.

In the Middle Ages, many European townspeople celebrated the New Year with a hilarious noisy brawl they called, "The Feast of Fools." For a few days, the poor peasants came together, laughed and played. They forgot their taxes, their work in the fields, and their duty to bow to "My Lord," and "My Lady." They strutted, pranced, drank and danced as they welcomed in the New Year. The memory of each Feast of Fools would warm them through many a cold winter day to come.

In the last century, Indian tribes of the North American plains held a Sun Dance each year at the beginning of summer. Through the long days and nights of feasting and dancing, they ceremoniously reaffirmed their basic beliefs in the world, their hopes for strength in battle, and their desires of good fortune for the tribe.

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During the Olympic Games, the Feast of Fools, and the Sun Dance, people stepped out of the ordinary way of life, and came together in a special way. They celebrated a special moment in life of the community with the result that they felt closer together and reaffirmed as a community.

Achieving community through celebration also happened with the first Christians. They learned this way of living from Christ. Christ lived at a time when feasts and celebrations were an essential part of community life. His first appearance in his public life was at a wedding party, and he spent the last night of his life sharing the traditional Passover meal with his friends.

After the Resurrection, Jesus' followers gathered in small groups to talk about him, his life and death, and the direction their lives should take. These first Christian celebrations weren't very structured. The people simply gathered, usually in someone's home, and spent some time together, gaining strength and hope from each other. They celebrated a simple meal of bread and wine that Christ had asked them to share in memory of him. They sometimes would bring out an instrument and they would sing and read the scriptures. It was happy and spontaneous, a perfectly natural celebration. AND JESUS WAS PRESENT.

But Jesus would not restrict his presence to only those times when his followers celebrated the Eucharist in memory of him. Jesus would challenge the community of believers to literally CELEBRATE important moments, significant events in their lives by the gift of his sacraments. Sacraments are another answer to the question: WHERE IS JESUS. He is present in the community when the community celebrates moments of birth, healing, growth, union, leadership, eating, and sickness. In each of these instances, Jesus has left us as the Christian community the opportunity to discover him and to answer our question: WHERE IS JESUS?

Sacraments are actions of Christ performed through the instrumentality of men and women acting in his name. In each of the sacraments, there is the opportunity to search for Jesus and to discover him. Each one offers that unique opportunity.

A welcome into any community is a special moment, a new beginning. Whether the welcome is into a new school, a new town, a club, or a community of believers, it's special. When the Christian first seeks out Jesus in the sacrament of Baptism, it is really a welcome by Jesus into a community of faith.

I know when I baptize children, which I really enjoy doing, I usually begin by saying something like the following:

"We're here today to welcome new members into our Christian community in a simple celebration. We think that we have a good life and we want to share it with our children. We believe in Christ, the life he led, and things he taught. We believe in brotherhood, love, and hope. And we try to live the way we believe.

"Sometimes, it's not easy. Sometimes we feel like we're marching to a different drummer whose cadence is love and charity in a world teeming with hatred, poverty and despair. But we keep going, because we feel that a community such as ours is worthwhile and necessary. We want our children to experience what we believe in. We feel that perhaps we can give them some important values to grow up with. We're christening these new members - or, rather, they're being Christ-ed - to welcome them into our way of life."

"So today we're baptizing...who?...John Peter, Cheryl Ann, Daniel Thomas, and Michael Patrick. And we're saying, 'Welcome! Welcome to our world!'"

In Baptism, the Church simply takes the idea of welcome and celebrates this human reality in a ceremonial and religious way whereby the child first meets the Lord Jesus. The Church does the same with all the sacraments. Each sacrament is a special human moment that the Christian community celebrates, birth, adult commitment, taking nourishment, dealing with problems, finding love and sexual union, choosing a vocation, and facing sickness and death. Each sacrament is a community celebration that says "yes" to life at these important moments. And with each celebration, there is a renewed sense of togetherness with the community that welcomed us at Baptism. And it is all done in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Another opportunity to meet Christ is when we receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. This sacrament of confirmation is about commitment. The Church asks us to commit ourselves in a new way, a way that states we're ready for ~~##~~ more responsibility. Confirmation occurs at a point in our lives when we realize we're not quite adults, but we're certainly no longer children. So the Church asks us to make a commitment to the Christian community and its beliefs.

In Confirmation, we acquire three responsibilities. (1) The first is to ourselves - to take others and our Christian commitment seriously. We must try to be all we can be, as Christians and as individuals. (2) The second responsibility of a confirmed Christian is to his or her own Christian community. "I wasn't sure I needed the Church, until I discovered the Church needed me," said a recent candidate for Confirmation/ (3) The third responsibility is to the world around us. Jesus was a man of peace and love who cared for others. So we must try to be the same kind of person.

In Communion, we have already seen earlier this week what this sacrament offers to us - the opportunity to meet Christ. When as a priest, I say The Body of Christ, I am offering you the opportunity to meet Jesus. Your "Amen" is an affirmation, a yes, said loud and clear that your search for Jesus ends because you find Him present in the Eucharist.

The sacrament of Penance offers us the opportunity to find a different face of Jesus - a forgiving face. Penance is our reconciliation with the community and with God. We come to them and they forgive us through the priest, their representative. This confession and forgiveness also reconciles us to ourselves and we come away with a new feeling of hope and peace - two rare commodities in the world today. Unfortunately, the sacrament of Penance isn't very popular today. The old business of standing in line, fidgeting, and finally slipping into an airless black box to recite a laundry list of sins turns many people off. Yet, people have a need to talk to someone. It's human nature for people to talk about their faults, their struggles, their problems. We like to be given reassurance, to be understood, to be given a word or two of advice. We're all a bit alone and confused sometimes. It helps us to talk things over - and in the Sacrament of ~~#####~~ Penance to meet the forgiving Christ.

Christ is also present in that fantastic moment when two young people make a commitment to each other in the sacrament of marriage. The heart of every marriage and every wedding ceremony is the simple promise of two people to love and honor one another. This promise is a pledge that involves many unknowns - struggle, happiness, good moments and bad moments throughout their lifetime. As a man and woman say "yes" to each other, they begin a new way of meeting each other and also the Lord Jesus who blesses their union.

However, if Christ is to continue in the Christian community, he needs people who will lead. It needs men who will listen to people and their problems and to help solve them. This task asks a great deal of a person and that is why Christ continues his presence among those men whom he calls priests. As Christ's representative, the priest must try to become what Christ was, a center of unity for His Church. The priest becomes the community's celebrator of moments teeming with possibility - birth, marriage, death. As Rector of a seminary where young men spend the last four years of their education, it is a real privilege filled with excitement to be involved with the lives of young talented men who are willing to bring Christ to others through priesthood.

And in the final moments of life or in serious sickness, Christ also becomes present in our community through the anointing of the sick. Today dying is, in some ways, a more difficult emotional experience than it was generations ago. Natural death - unlike the violent death the media bombard us with - is removed from our awareness. Relatives and friends die away from us, in hospitals and nursing homes where we can visit them only at specified times for short intervals. Or else, we endure the slow painful death of a loved one or are asked to accept the quick sudden death of a heart attack or car accident. But even in this situation, Christ comes to our community in the physical and spiritual healing he offers to the sick person. Never did this reality hit me so deeply as when I anointed my own mother. She had been ill, lost a great deal of weight. It will be forever indelible in my mind as I traced the sign of the cross on her eyes, nose, mouth, ears, hands while saying the prayer of the old ritual and realizing I was offering the very person who gave me physical life the gift of Christ's life.

WHERE IS JESUS? At first glance earlier this week we might have wondered if there really is an answer to that question. But once again this evening we see the presence of Jesus in our midst through the sacraments whereby he literally comes in contact with us.

Our search for Jesus has not been fruitless. Our exploration has been most worthwhile. In fact, it is somewhat reminiscent of the lines said by a young soldier the night before he died in the play, "A Sleep of Prisoners," by Christopher Fry:

DARK AND COLD WE MAY BE, BUT THIS IS NOW INTER NOW
 THE FROZEN MISERY OF CENTURIES, BREAKS, CRACKS, BEGINS TO MOVE.
 THE TUNDRER IS THE THUNDER OF THE FLOES, THE THAW, THE FLOOD, THE UPSTART SPRING.
 THANK GOD OUR TIME IS NOW WHEN WRONG COMES UP TO FACE US EVERYWHERE, NEVER TO LEAVE
 US TILL WE TAKE THE LONGEST STRIDE OF SOUL MEN EVER TOOK. AFAFAIRS ARE NOW SOUL
 SIZE. THE ENTERPRISE IS EXPLORATION INTO GOD.

PARISH MISSION
ST. JOHN BREBUF
March 14, 1975

NOW THAT WE'VE FOUND HIM, WHAT DO WE DO?

Thank God our time is now
When wrong comes up to face us everywhere
Never to leave us
Till we take the longest stride of soul men ever took
Affairs are now soul-size
The enterprise is exploration into God.

Thank God our time is now. The enterprise is exploration into God. This is what we have been about this past week - an exploration, a searching for God present in the Lord Jesus in the world in which we live here and now. WHERE IS JESUS? That has been our cry. And the answers have come through loud and clear as a result of opening our eyes of faith, increasing our ability to hear. WHERE IS JESUS? He IS present in the Church, in the Eucharist, in the Word of God, and finally in the community itself when we are gathered in His name. But now that we've found him, what do we do?

Probably the most sensible answer to that question is to ask ourselves another question. If we have found Jesus, how are we guaranteed in keeping him? The answer again is simple: it is to maintain the relationship we have established with him as a result of our Baptism.

In the Old Testament, a man was called "just" because of the relationship the man had to God. So much depended on the relationship which existed. The contradiction of that relationship is the experience of sin. Consequently, once we have found Jesus, it is our task and responsibility to maintain the relationship we have established; it is our task and responsibility to avoid sin.

In the past, often enough, sin was viewed in terms of a quantity of evil. It was described as something impersonal, isolated, objective from the reality of life itself. The Church today is asking us to look at sin in terms of relationships to God, ourselves and others. Sin occurs in our lives when that relationship is weakened or broken. Sin must be seen in terms of a relationship.

If sin does occur in our lives and we want to keep the Jesus we have searched for, then we have to experience CONVERSION. Conversion is the essential message of Jesus. In each account of his public life, the first proclamation of Jesus was: REPENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND. This is the message portrayed for all of us to see in your own Church with the banner strung across the front of the sanctuary: RETURN TO ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART.

Conversion means a radical change of one's actions primarily, but of one's heart or self. Conversion is the change of a person at the deepest level of himself. Conversion is truly a change of heart. It is interesting to note that in the Old Testament, there is ~~no~~ word used to describe our understanding of conscience. The closest the Old Testament comes to describing conscience is the use of the word "heart." And the heart summarizes the total life of man. It is the total life of man which we ask to experience a true experience of conversion.

There does occur in each of our lives that split second between time and eternity. This is the experience of death. It is at that moment that we stand before God, and depending on our relationship to Him, He will either welcome us into His presence for all eternity or simply admit that He does not know us. When God admits that he does not know us, then that is the beginning of Hell.

Heaven and Hell are realities. They do exist. Our presence in one or the other for all eternity will be determined by the relationship or lack thereof which we have to God and to Jesus. Relationships are neither established or broken in single isolated instances. They are the result of life-lived. Consequently, the challenge to the Christian, to the Roman Catholic, is that once we have found Jesus in the various ways already described, it is our task, our responsibility, our privilege to maintain and to increase this relationship.

But how is this done? Perhaps the answer is found in realizing our responsibilities as believers in the Lord Jesus here and now? Perhaps, the answer is found in our response to the call of ministry which Jesus has offered to each of us.

We have heard often the word MINISTRY. But unfortunately we think of ministry in restricted terms as only applying to the priest or religious. In reality, ministry is service to the community in the name of Jesus. Each baptized person is called to ministry by the very reason of his baptism and his initial contact with Christ.

The experience of ministry must be part of the life of every Christian. But all ministries are not the same. There is a distinction among the ministries that do exist within the Christian community. For instance, we know the ministry of a priest is a specific role whereby a man is ordained for specific tasks and functions. But the priest and/or deacon is not the only minister in the Church. There is the extraordinary minister of communion whose ministry consists in sharing the presence of the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist with others. There is the ministry of reader or lector whereby a man or woman shares the presence of Jesus with the community through the proclamation of the word of God. These are officially recognized ministries within the Church which have their own special rituals for installation.

But service to the Christian community must have a wider parameter than just those men and women called ^{to} specialized ordained and consecrated religious service. The recognition of Jesus by each of us asks us in turn to look for the opportunities for ministry in the Church today.

Where does one discover and exercise ministry in the Church today. Parishes respond to this question through the various organizations and groups which exist in each parish. Your own parish of St. John Brebeuf has countless opportunities for people of all ages to exercise and experience ministry.

One need only look at the long list of parish societies and organizations to see that there is a place and opportunity for everyone. These involve everything from the Catholic Women's Club to CCD, from the Choir to the Festival Board, the Guitar Group to the Holy Name Society. Your parish has opportunities for ministry through the Holy Name Society, Joy In Jesus Program, Sr. and Sr. St. Vincent de Paul Program, the Prayer Groups, Pre-Cana Program, Right to Life, School Help, School Board, Scouting, Senior Citizens, Spred, Teen Club, Ushers, Ongoing Religious Education and Formation for adults. Somewhere in this long litany of societies and organizations we must find our exercise of ministry.

But in this exercise of ministry, we must search for Jesus and look for Jesus by imitating him in his ministry.

In this evening's Gospel, we see Jesus in the exercise of ministry. There are five qualities of Jesus which come through to us if we look at what he said and did. These same five qualities should be part of our lives in making Jesus present in our ministry today.

The first quality Jesus showed us was his own availability. In the incident in tonight's Gospel, Christ shows us that we are supposed to be available to people when they might need our help. Christ is described as being busy when an official came up and asked him to stop what he was doing and go visit his daughter and bring her back to health. Christ immediately went to help the official and his daughter. If we are to be Christian ministers, then we must be available when people need our help, and we must not put them off because we happen to be doing something else at the time.

Perhaps the most important lesson the entire New Testament is indicated in the second lesson of this miracle story. It is not enough for a Christian to be available. We must be that kind of person that people will readily and willingly approach when they need some help. We must take that giant step and be the kind of people who can express their loving concern in a way others can understand it. Imagine what a waste of time it would be for a person to pretend to be a Christian and not be an approachable person.

The third quality of ministry is awareness. We must be aware of what is going on around us, sensitive to the needs of those around us, and then we must act. Our tone of voice, our facial expression, our gestures reveal this quality of awareness.

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The fourth quality of ministry is a basic human quality called good manners. Good manners would seem to be a quality taken from Emily Post or Dale Carnegie but in this very Gospel story, we see the importance of good manners in Jesus himself, in the official and woman who appear for a brief moment.

The final quality of ministry is courage. We have to be courageous enough to minister.

These five qualities characterized Christ's ministry and as a result, people were able to touch Him and he in turn touched people. In exercising our ministry as Christian, there are definite risks. But again the example of Christ is before us as we approach the conclusion of Lent. Christ would risk his own life and it would be taken.

Last Sunday, I gave the example of the portraits in the Sistine Chapel of God as Father stretching forth His hand to touch men. Our search this week has been for each of us to stretch forth our hand and discover the Lord Jesus. How often should this be done? In a sense, every day, every moment.

The value of each day, each moment is so important. This is brought out in a closing scene from the classic play, OUR TOWN.

Where is Jesus? He's all around us. What do we do once we find Him. We have to maintain the all important relationship we have and avoid sin. But the next step is the step with which I challenge you this evening: to be ministers of Jesus today and now.