



Simple Gifts

Words to Inspire the Spirit

IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

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The Body, the Church, and the Power of a Metaphor

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My wife, Patty, says I have a rich internal life. I am choosing to hear that as a compliment, because I believe she is referring to the ways in which I engage imagery, metaphor. For example, house cleaning is not just cleaning, it becomes historic restoration. Making the bed isn't just as it appears to be, it is creating order, a small hint of the order God displayed in Creation. You get the idea. Images help us to engage a deeper reality.

Saint Paul understood the power of images, and he used a metaphor that has always spoken to me, and which might be even more applicable to us now during this time of crisis. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Paul engages an extensive and developed metaphor, comparing the human body to the Church and its members.

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ” (verse 12).

Part of the power of this metaphor is that all his hearers, then and now — literally anyone who has a *body*, would understand what he is saying. We in Christ's Body, the Church, are all related, and we all depend on each other.

“As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable...” (verses 20-22).

To quote the slogan we hear so much now, “We’re all in this together.” Paul knew how the Church needed the unique gifts, abilities, and perspectives each of the members could bring. They would not all fulfill the same tasks.

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (verse 26).

This is part of the reason for our separation during this time. We are looking out for those among us who are most susceptible to this horrible disease. Make no mistake, our separation is hard, and it costs us all, but as our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry would have us ask, “What would love do?”

It is exceedingly challenging to be the Church when the Church is dispersed. Indeed, much that is essential to our common life cannot be experienced right now. But we are still the Body of Christ, God is with us, and we are responding to God's love and to the needs of our neighbors in new and exciting ways.

It is important to remember and trust that the Body, the Church, is still there, whether we can see it or not. It is also helpful for each of us, from time to time, to give thanks for the unique gifts God has given us and ask how we are putting them to use for the good of the whole.

For these reasons, and so many more, I am thinking of the song “10,000 Reasons.” I hope you will give this powerful, hopeful version of it a listen. God bless you all, we in Christ's Body, the Church.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtwIT8JiddM>