

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today's second reading from St. Paul to the Corinthians continues a theme we reflected upon last week in which St. Paul spoke of the multiplicity of gifts we receive through God's grace. St. Paul offers the image of the various parts of the body to demonstrate our interdependence and mutual support of one another as baptized companions of Jesus. The late Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday we as a nation celebrated last week, wrote in a speech in 1967 that: "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality."

These salient words of Rev. King reflect what St. Paul is telling us. We cannot be indifferent to one another as members of the Body of Christ. We are not mutually exclusive and utterly reliant upon ourselves. There is the temptation at times to become isolated in our reality, to become disengaged from the experiences of those around us. As we meditate upon the Eucharist and how, by its very essence it unifies us as One Body, we begin to see that our interconnectedness is foundational to our Christian identity. As St. Paul wrote, "God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share in its joy."

St. Luke, of the four evangelists, begins his Gospel with a preface. He addresses it to Theophilus, which in Greek means "friend of God." Luke frames the body of the Gospel with a beautiful backdrop of describing how Jesus returned to Galilee and then journeyed on to Nazareth, preached to the people and transformed their lives. In the temple he reveals that as the Messiah he is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free."

Through the gift and grace of Baptism, in the spirit of mutual interdependence of which St. Paul speaks, the Lord invites each of us to be heralds of the Good News, glad tidings, in the varied circumstances of our lives. We can do this in a number of ways: speaking words of encouragement to others; listening with compassion and empathy to someone who is struggling and having difficulty in life; exercising works of mercy such as supporting the St. Vincent de Paul Society or donating to local agencies which provide services to the poor, the elderly, the homeless. Let us ask the Lord to help us to be open and free to living out the Gospel imperative to love one another by fulfilling and making concrete the words of the prophet Isaiah we have heard proclaimed this day!

Fr. Tom