



*Dear Parishioners,*

For some time now, psychologists and social workers have been putting out alarms about the phenomenon of text messaging. It's not unheard of for adolescents to be sitting right across from one another in a cafeteria and having a conversation. The same is true of young couples in restaurants. They text back and forth rather than simply looking at one another and having a conversation. The red flag about text messaging is that it is instant and impersonal. It is efficient, yes. But this raises the question whether all life is simply about efficiency. The Gospel this Sunday suggests otherwise.

The Gospel leads us to believe that Jesus' reputation as a miracle worker was spreading ("*Everyone is looking for You*"). Not surprisingly, "*they brought to [Jesus] all who were ill or possessed by demons.*" In fact, "*the whole town was gathered at the door*" of Simon's and Andrew's house. Had efficiency been the point, Jesus could have simply willed everyone to be healed within, say, a hundred-mile radius. How efficient that would have been! But surely something incredibly important would have been missing: the personal touch that characterizes Jesus' ministry.

For Jesus, people are not just numbers or projects to be taken care of in as efficient a manner as possible. No, there is something incredibly personal about approaching a friend's sick mother-in-law, about friends bringing the sick to someone who promises hope and healing. And this is a point of the Gospel: surely Jesus has the power to heal, but even more important, these healing accounts are instances of the far-reaching power of Jesus to save. Jesus' healing others is a sign of salvation. And salvation is always up close and personal. Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law was very personal: He *approached* her, *grasped* her hand, and *helped* her up.

But there is more to this Gospel. In reaching out to the "whole of Galilee," Jesus responds to the universal human condition of misery and hopelessness. But He always does so in a very personal way. The ministry of Jesus is truly about all humanity's experiencing the transformation of human hopelessness through personal encounter with Jesus. Jesus' desire is that others experience the Good News of His personal care and presence. Even now, Jesus treats each of us just as personally as He treated Simon's mother-in-law and the others who were brought to Him for care. All we need to do is come to Him in hope and trust.

In all these healings (and we will be hearing more in the Sundays to come), we receive glimpses of the greater mystery being revealed by Jesus: the mystery of salvation ... the movement from death to life. The evil that affects all of our lives in one way or another is a reminder that the kingdom of God is "not yet" fully established. The healings and Good News of Jesus are reminders that the kingdom is "already" gradually being revealed in the words and deeds of Jesus, whose mission is to inaugurate God's kingdom.

By means of personal encounters with individuals in the healings, Jesus establishes a relationship with others so that He might preach the Good News that God's kingdom is at hand. The healings performed by Jesus inaugurate the kingdom of God ... inaugurate salvation. We know that Jesus desired to preach in the "nearby villages." We know that Jesus desired to preach in them wholeness. As His disciples, this is our work as well. It is our way of life. We must be as up close and personal as Jesus was.

May Saint Michael the Archangel defend, guide, and intercede for us always!

*Fr. Larry Polansky, Pastor*