

Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time, 7-1-18

I remember reading a story about a pediatrician who would make his rounds at a hospital. At the bottom of the chart for each of the children, he would always add **“hug and touch this child at least every hour or as often as possible.”** At the time I read this I was visiting Dad (Mom had passed) every day at the nursing home. I reflected on Dad and thought to myself, “The only time he’s getting any touch is from the staff and usually it is because they are tending to him in some way.” And so I started to hug him, massage his neck, and touch him as much as I could when I was with him. I would kiss him on top of the head every time I visited him...as I arrived and as I was leaving. I don’t know if it made a difference to Dad. He couldn’t tell me. But it was good for me to touch him every day.

Rachel Naomi Remen, a physician who works on humanizing the world of medicine tells a story she calls “Kissing the Boo-Boo.” Jessie had suffered a temporary bowel obstruction from adhesions that had been caused by the radiation used to treat her cancer. When the pain began she packed a small overnight bag and drove herself twenty-five miles to the hospital. She had to pull over several times to vomit. Then, she spent one full day in the emergency room. When Rachel asked her why she did, not call any of her friends, she said they were all working and besides

“none of my friends knows a thing about intestinal obstruction.”

“Then why didn’t you call me?”

“Well, it’s not really your field either,” she replied.

“Jessie,” I said, “even children instinctively run to others when they fall down.” With a great deal of heat she said, “Yes, I’ve never understood that. It’s so silly. Kissing the boo-boo doesn’t help the pain at all.” I was stunned. “Jessie,” I said, “it doesn’t help the pain, it helps the loneliness.”

Jesus goes to where the pain is in the Gospel proclaimed. He always does. On his way to see the Jairus’ sick daughter, a woman touches Jesus’ cloak. Because of her faith, Jesus feels the power run through him. Jesus stays awake to what and whom he encounters on the outside, and is touched on the inside by others’ faith. Taking the little girl by the hand, he calls her to be awake and alive. Amazing!

We’re called to follow him. Be aware. Reach out a helping hand. When we touch others we truly touch and get in touch with God who walks with us. We heal others’ aloneness and ours as well...always. We all need somebody to lean on. God’s shoulder is always there for us. Can we be there for each other? That is one question the scripture calls us to ponder today. God is good...all the time...