

*“We are a ‘touchy’ people, Father... we like to touch.”*

*Dear Friends of St. Jude,*



*The Madonna and Child between St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Alexandria, c. 1435; Fra Angelico (1395-1455)*

I was invited for this past St. Jude feast by the devotees of St. Jude in Tucumán, Argentina, to come and give a novena with some of our relics of St. Jude, while Fr. James Moore, OP, my predecessor, was kind enough to cover for me back in the States. It was a joyous and moving experience in many ways, and helped me to see things in a new light that would not be possible here, since we are so accustomed to having St. Jude always with us.

Near the beginning, I was discussing the veneration of the relics of St. Jude at the end of Mass with one of my hosts, and how best to proceed. He told me, “We are a ‘touchy’ people, Father... we like to touch.” And indeed, they were! Many wanted to touch St. Jude more than receive a blessing, to press his reliquary firmly in their hands, to their foreheads, to honor with a kiss, to do something much more tactile than we are used to here.

And that is Christmas in the flesh. For the Jews, God was wholly and entirely Other. For Him to be called “Holy, Holy, Holy,” was to name Him, in a sense, “Most and Entirely Unlike Ourselves.” Yes, He was present in all things and all things were known to Him, but how would a mere creature even begin to capture the wonder of this God?

Christmas - Christmas is how. For Christ to take on our flesh and our nature, in all things but sin, meant that perhaps His first human act upon being born, would have been to reach out and touch the Blessed Virgin and Joseph, to hold on to His own creatures with the tiniest of human fingers. There would have been nothing more human, nor at the same time, more Divine, than for God to bridge that infinite chasm between Creator and Creature in the same flesh, through mere created matter.

He continues that Christmas miracle in the Sacraments, where our senses are enveloped in the outward signs that we receive to enact within us a spiritual, graced encounter with the Living and True God. The same God that grasped the finger of Mary, the same God that touched the eyes of the blind man, the same God that urged St. Thomas to touch His very side to strengthen His faith, such is the same God that always invites us to reconnect with Him, not in a virtual sense, but in a fully real sense, from the outward flesh and senses to the inmost depths of our souls.



We are all a “touchy” people in one sense, even if we are not all given to being “touchy-feely.” We are born with this sense, the need to connect with our parents through the very gift of the flesh they gave us – could it even be our first instinct placed in us by God? I imagine that perhaps the Virgin Mary echoed the same words that St. Thomas did upon seeing the Risen Christ in the flesh lay a firm hold of her finger: My Lord and my God!

Sacraments – all are a foretaste, then, of Heaven, and of the Resurrection of the Dead, when we shall burst with the same Christmas joy at seeing our God, in the flesh, and in *our* flesh, recalling the words of the holy patriarch Job:

*For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I will see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom (Job 19:26-27).*

And we shall be as children on that first new day, reaching out to touch, in the purest, most unadulterated joy, the hand and flesh of our God – unending Christmas joy.

With all the staff, volunteers, and fellow devotees of St. Jude here, we wish you a most Blessed Christmas and New Year, filled with that Christmas joy.

In Christ our Lord and St. Jude our friend,

*Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.*

Fr. Dismas Sayre, OP  
Director

*Christmas Novena, December 25<sup>th</sup> – January 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Christ continues to make himself present among us, truly present among us, in the Eucharist and the Mass. As is our custom, we will celebrate a novena of Masses for our friends and benefactors. If you wish to send your petitions, please mail them to us on the enclosed slip, or enter them online, and we will place them upon the altar of St. Jude for you and remember them this Christmas.

