

Monday Night Prayer

[child's voice: 'I am a child'. 'I've got eyes, hands, a voice and a heart'. 'I am'. 'I am here'. 'I am here to take part']. In the child's declaration 'I am', with eyes, hands, voice and heart, we see the image of God' (Genesis 1:27). A child that is all that God is and all that is good, and yet a unique human being, - whose very own name is 'engraved on the palms of GOD's hands' (Isaiah 49:16).

And the child says, 'I am here to take part'; 'I am here to play'; 'I am here' to **participate**'. How do we understand their part? How do we understand our part when we say 'I am' and 'I am here'? Part – a portion, a piece, a fraction...of a whole. There the child is and there I am, and there I am, and there I am - each part being in belonging to a whole. Powerful imagery of the New Testament is the **one** body of Christ (Romans 12: 3-8, Corinthians 12: 12 -27). '[T]he body is not made up of one part but of many' (Corinthians 12: 14), 'so it is with Christ' (Corinthians 12: 12). 'For just as each of us has one body with many members...'so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others (Romans 12:4-5).

Recognition of our oneness – when I turn to you and see you, and see me and see one – affirms my human dignity and yours, and it affirms the meaning to be found in life. I, unique and essential, am here to take part; I am here to participate -to act for the common good and to share in all that is good.

And so is the child. The child is here for 'participation and inclusion'(Mercer, 2005). As 'God has put together' each part (Corinthians 12:24), the child from childhood is 'disciple...and participant, unique and essential, [and to] be taken seriously' as a citizen of the one body (Mercer, 2005).

How do we respond when we meet the stranger – the child, the person - we do not immediately recognise as part of ourselves?

And how do we respond in our ‘common unity’ - the ‘community’ of our Church and our schools - when a child, a family, a person - so often the most vulnerable - is made ‘a part’: a part from, set a part, when they come apart.

These are the times to remember that I and the other are one, and that the greatest commandment is to love one another (John 15:12). Times when the words of Jesus – who was once infant, child, man, person, othered, and set a part – take on most profound meaning, “[take] my body given for you; and re-member me” (Luke 22). Make me – the stranger and the other **a member** again: part of the whole- where I live ‘a dignified life, actively participating in the common good’(Pope Francis, in part citing Benedict XVI, 5/25/13).

Reading

First Letter to the Corinthians: 12: 12-27

¹²Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For we were all baptized by^[c] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

¹⁴Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty,

²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

The Word of the LORD

Praise to you, LORD Jesus Christ.

Prayer written and prepared by Elizabeth Dickinson, for Catholic Education SA on the occasion of the the visit of *Professor Carla Rinaldi* July-August 2014