

The Body of Christ

Rich Nathan

October 7-8, 2006

The Beloved Community Series

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Some of you who have been in the church for some period of time may have heard me tell this story before. But it is such an apt illustration. My dad was in the Navy during WWII. He served both in the Atlantic and Pacific theatres. He piloted a landing craft that hit Omaha Beach on D-Day before H-Hour. In fact, he celebrated his 21st birthday on the Beach at Normandy landing troops there for the invasion of Europe. When he was in the Pacific theatre, his job in the Navy was to run the engine room on his ship. He used to be a diesel mechanic before he went into construction.

Those who know my mechanical ability often say, "It's clear, Rich, that the apple sure hasn't fallen far from the tree."

Now, my dad loves to eat dessert. That is one trait that I did inherit from him. So he and a few of his Navy buddies who worked down in the engine room used to borrow several gallons of fresh cream from the kitchen. He mixed up the cream with some canned fruit cocktail and stirred it all together in one of those old fashioned ice cream makers with salt and ice to make Tutti-Fruity ice cream. When he got tired of stirring this mixture by hand, he came up with a brilliant idea. He hooked up this contraption to a moving part on the ship's engine. On the other end, he put a big spoon to stir the ice cream. So he had this 20,000 horsepower diesel engine working for the sole purpose of moving a spoon to make his ice cream.

I asked him if he didn't think this was a big waste. He smiled and said, "No, actually, the Skipper used to come down to eat ice cream in the engine room also."

That picture of an enormous engine being used to stir a little spoon to make ice cream is a picture of the way much of the Christian church operates most of the time. We have this incredible source of power in our midst who is called the Holy Spirit. We have been given this incredible commission by none other than Jesus Christ himself. We read this Great Commission statement in Matthew 28.18-20,

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Mt 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus tells us that he is with us. We know that he is with us by and through the Holy Spirit, whom he has sent, to communicate his personal presence. He is with us in order to enable us to disciple the nations, bring the world under the authority of Christ. And what is it that we the church do with the infinite power of the Holy Spirit? We tie a little spoon to him so that he can enable us to have Sunday morning church meetings.

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The Body of Christ: More than a Sunday morning meeting.

Now, if the Holy Spirit was only given to enable the church to have great Sunday morning meetings, then I say this with all reverence, but the Holy Spirit is way over engineered for that task. God the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, who is filled with infinite love and goodness, truth and power; God the Holy Spirit was not sent into the world merely to help the church to have a good meeting.

You see, brothers and sisters, the church was not created simply to have a meeting on Sunday morning. The meeting was created to equip the church for their task of serving Christ and serving the world.

Let me try to apply this in a couple of other directions, by way of introduction. There are some of you who may be trying to decide which church to make your church home. Perhaps you are deciding between Vineyard Columbus and some other church in Central Ohio. Or perhaps you live out of town and you are deciding between two churches in your community. Maybe you are trying to decide whether to stay here and put roots down, or go else where.

The biblical way to measure a church is not how much do you like the Sunday morning meeting. The biblical measure of a church is how effectively employed is the church in doing the activity of Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor, who was arrested by the Nazis Gestapo during WWII for Bonhoeffer's anti-Nazis activities. Bonhoeffer wrote one of the best little books on community that I've ever read. I would highly recommend it to you. We've got some copies in the bookstore. The book is titled *Life Together*. And then when he was in prison, he wrote a number of letters that were collected in a book called *Letters and Papers from Prison*. The book was published following his execution in prison. But here is what Bonhoeffer said,

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The Church is the Church only when it exists for others.

Here at Vineyard we take Bonhoeffer's statement that he made in prison to heart. And so the vision statement of our church reads:

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Our vision as a church is "to be a **R.E.L.E.V.A.N.T.** church that does not exist for itself, but for Christ and for the world."

I've been doing a series on the church that I called *The Beloved Community*. The phrase springs from the sermons of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was his desire to see a community in which all of the various things that separate people were broken down – issues of race, economics, and ethnicity – and people would live together in peace and harmony.

But you know, lots of times we miss the purpose of the church. And just like my dad, who used a Navy destroyer's engine to make ice cream, we use the power of the Holy Spirit and the name of Christ simply for our own enjoyment and our own blessing. We've explored a number of descriptions of the church in the New Testament. We've talked about the church as being the people of God. We've discussed the church as the Israel of God and the New Creation of God. Today we are going to look at one of the most frequently used metaphors for the church – The Body of Christ. That's the title for today's talk. Let's pray.

SLIDE – 1 Cor. 12.12-14

¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by 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. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

To get us to see clearly what the church is for, that the church goes beyond Sunday morning meetings, that there is a missional purpose for the church, and that the Sunday morning meeting is designed to deploy the church out into the community. The measure of a church is not how good the meeting is or whether people are at work in the community doing the work of Christ. Paul uses this image of the Body of Christ.

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The Body of Christ: An intimate relationship with Christ.

Now this illustration of the church as the Body of Christ wasn't just randomly chosen by the apostle Paul. There is a deep mystery of intimacy between the church and Christ that Paul is getting at here. I mean, it would not be adequate

to call the church Christ's Car or Christ's Screwdriver, instead of Christ's Body. It is true that the church is owned by Christ just as we might own a car or screwdriver. And it is also true that the church is used by Christ to accomplish his purposes just like we use a car or a screwdriver to accomplish certain ends.

But once we are done using a tool, we throw it in the toolbox. We park our car in the driveway or the garage and leave it alone. But it is different for us to be called the Body of Christ. Paul is saying that the relationship of Christ and the church is more than ownership and it is even more than just being a means to an end. We always start with the notion that the church's relationship with Christ is the most intimate of any relationship of all of creation. Paul hints at this using the analogy of marriage in Eph. 5. We read in v. 31-32,

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³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

The oneness between a husband and wife is just a bare reflection of, just an inadequate pointer to, the intimacy and unity that is to exist between Christ and the church. In fact, that unity goes beyond the image of husband and wife. Paul says that we are the body of Christ. So close is the relationship between Christ and his church, that we read these words in 1 Corinthians 12:12,

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Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

These are shocking words because we expect to read in v. 12 something like this:

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Just as the body, the one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is [with the church].

But Paul moves from discussing the church to discussing Christ. And this is true in many of Paul's writings. He slips back and forth between Christ and the church in a really surprising way. He is not saying the church is identical to Christ. We do not worship the church – that would be idolatry. We worship Christ. But Paul is getting at a mystery here. That there is such profound oneness and intimacy between Christ and his church that they form one whole called The Body of Christ. You can't divide them.

You see, if you stood in front of a mirror you could see that your upper body was really made up of two sections – the head and the torso. You don't have a

disembodied head. We don't just simply have a torso. So it is with the Body of Christ. Christ is the head, we are the torso and the limbs.

Before we talk about what the church is for, or how Christ wants to deploy the church, we need to ground our deployment in intimacy with Christ. The church is nothing other than a religious institution when it loses connection with the head. We have example after example in Christian history of social service agencies and community centers that were begun by Christians for Christian purposes, but gradually the distinctively Christian identity was lost and the agency or community center, hospital or college became indistinguishable from its secular counterparts.

There is a reason why we decided architecturally to connect the community center with this church so that future generations would never be able to separate the word of the community from the Christ-centered devotion that gave rise to the community center. We didn't want to start with a paper document, or an organizational charter. We want to impart in bricks and steel a connection that architecturally communicates the relationship between Christ and his church – no separation; no division; no clear lines of where one ends and the other begins.

And how is this relationship between Christ and the church established and maintained? The experience of Baptism by the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul is not talking about what charismatics or Pentecostals are referring to when they refer to the filling of the Spirit. He is talking about an experience not for an elite few. He is not talking about an experience that happened to some of us. We read,

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1Co 12:13 For we were all baptized by 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.

What is Paul referring to here by baptism by the Holy Spirit? I think that Jesus expressed his meaning in John 17 when he said in v. 23,

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Jn 17:23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Jesus in us; us in Jesus. This is what happens when the Spirit of God comes upon us. The church living in Jesus; Jesus living in the church. Worshipping

with Jesus, communicating with Jesus, listening to Jesus, devoted to Jesus, in love with Jesus, saturated with Jesus.

It is out of this kind of connection that we think through the purpose of the Body of Christ. What is the purpose of the church? Well, we read one purpose in vv. 15-20,

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¹Co 12:15 Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁷ If 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? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

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The Body of Christ: A place to belong.

As I've meditated upon 1 Cor. 12, this repeated statement, "I do not belong," really caught my attention. We see it here in v. 15,

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¹Co 12:15 Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

And, we see it again in v. 16

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¹Co 12:16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

We've all been in situations where we felt that a circle was drawn and we were on the outside, we were excluded, we didn't fit, we weren't the right type, we were made of different stuff than the other people who were part of the group. The church is the one place on earth where no matter who you are, through faith in Jesus Christ, you belong. There is no other institution where you can say anyone belongs. Only with regards to the church, the Body of Christ, can you say

that anyone, no matter what, no matter who, anyone who has been baptized by the Spirit through their faith in Christ, anyone belongs.

You say, "But you don't understand my background. You don't know how messed up I've been. You don't know what kind of life I've lived. You don't know the wreckage in my past. You don't know my abuse. You don't know all of my issues."

The Bible says, "None of that is relevant. You belong." If you are connected by faith to Christ, you are part of the Body. You may be in one of our recovery groups. You may be struggling to overcome an addiction. You may be in one of our support groups because of a horrific past. It doesn't matter, you belong.

Sometimes we say, "I don't belong," because we make comparisons with each other than make us feel inferior. The apostle Paul says this about comparisons in vv. 15 and 16,

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1Co 12:15 Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

Notice, friends, we tend to compare ourselves with those who are most like us only a little bit better. The foot doesn't compare itself with the eye. The foot compares itself with that part of the body that is most like it, only a little bit better – the hand. And the ear compares itself with that sense organ most like it only slightly more prominent. And we do the same thing.

Let me bring this down only a little bit further. The folks we struggle with regarding our envy are usually people who are not wildly unlike us. It is people who are like us, only a step ahead. I mean, you don't fret over Bill Gates' wealth. You fret over the fact that your brother or brother-in-law seems to be doing better financially than you. Or a person in your workgroup got a promotion you were hoping for. Moms, you are fretting over the national spelling bee champion. But you do struggle with the fact that your friends' children seem to be better behaved or are more successful in school than your children.

It is those nearest to us that we tend to envy and that we make negative comparisons with. False comparisons in the body of Christ. It doesn't matter what you look like, what you own, if you are connected to Christ by faith, you belong and you have an equal part. No one is ahead of you and no one is behind. We all have an equal part in the church.

But flowing out of his argument that we all have different gifts, that we make up different parts of the body, there is one supreme reason why in the church many people have a sense that they don't belong. There is one supreme reason flowing out of the apostle Paul's argument that many folks say to themselves, "You know, I don't fit here." The supreme reason is because the church, as a general rule, for most of history, has not respected the diversity of gifts that exists in its midst.

Sometimes the church so esteems a few select gifts that everyone in the church clamors for those few gifts. I've talked with people coming from certain churches in which teaching was the be-all and end-all of the churches' purpose. When asked them, "What do you think you were made for?" They say, "I think I would like to be a teacher. I am called to preach." But it says in v. 17 these words,

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1Co 12:17 If 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?

To paraphrase it, I would say

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If the whole body were a mouth, where would the service be?

Whenever we don't respect the diversity of gifts in the church, we create the sense among many, "I do not belong. I don't fit." Whenever we squash people's uniqueness and require everyone to function in the same way; when we try to jam square pegs into round holes, the square peg gets the message pretty quickly that he or she doesn't fit. And it is that way in the church. When churches push people into existing programs, systems and traditions, they don't always fit.

But when the church allows people the freedom to be themselves, to be unique, when the church creates programs based on the gifts and talents of the personalities of its members, then folks suddenly take a deep breath and say, "Hey, for the first time in any church I've ever been in, I feel like I belong here."

Let me press this home just a little bit. The past century has witnessed two very different kinds of economies in the world. One economy, the communist or socialist kind of economy has basically centralized command and control. I went to Russia right after the fall of communism and I noticed that every place I went – every restaurant, apartment, everyone was using the same glassware. I rarely notice people's glassware. In the US every single person has different glassware. In my own home, we probably have a dozen different kinds of glasses in the cupboards. But in Russia every single glass was the same. Central command dictated what a glass was supposed to look like. And if you wanted to drink from a glass, you would drink from that glass.

They used to have these horrible looking cars in Russia that were infamous for their lack of style. One of cars was called "The Volga." I was told by a Russian that because Central Command had determined that so many million tons of steel had to be produced, they had an excess of steel production and they didn't know what to do with the steel. So Central Command mandated that every single car have an extra ton of steel added to it. So you saw the thickness of the doors on these old Volga's; the sheet metal must have been an inch thick.

Command and control. You are going to make 500,000 left shoes, all in size 8. You say, "But I want a right shoe to go along with the left shoe and my foot isn't a size 8, it is 9 or 10." Well, too bad. Central planning has determined that we're only going to make one shoe size – 8.

Friends, most churches function like the old communist central command and control system. The church determines a few programs that its going to run. Most of them revolve around Sunday morning – ushering, greeting, and singing in the choir, children's ministry. And if you don't have the temperament to be an usher, or the voice to sing in the choir, you will get the message pretty quickly, "I don't fit; I don't belong."

But what if we scrapped the old command and control system which has been a disaster for the world's economy and it has been a disaster for the church. What if we allowed a little grassroots capitalism to emerge? What if we said as a church, "We're going to allow programs to spring up grassroots from individual creativity and the diversity of gifts that exist in the body." What do you think would happen then? I will tell you what would happen – it would be like what's going on in China today. Suddenly, from utter poverty, you have the world's fastest growing economy.

The Spirit of God is saying, "Take the controls off, church. Let the gifts determine the programs and strategies that you employ."

How many of you are familiar with the name Kyle MacDonald? He is the guy who in the past year bartered his way from a single red paper clip to a house through a series of trades on eBay. He bartered the paperclip for fish-shaped pen. He traded the pen the same day for a hand-sculpted doorknob. He traded the doorknob for a Coleman camp stove with fuel. He traded the camp stove for a Honda generator. He traded the generator for a keg of beer and a Budweiser sign. He kept trading up and up and up until at the end he traded a movie role that he had won for a 2-story farmhouse in Canada.

Now imagine if the church unleashed this kind of entrepreneurial Spirit-led creativity. Talk about world change. Its this belief in forming a church around the diversity of gifts present here that forms the philosophy of Vineyard Columbus.

Rather than top-down command central control, we believe in bottom-up diversity of gifts as the Spirit of God directs.

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The Church That Uses A Command And Control Model	The Church That Is Based Upon The Diversity Of Members' Gifts
1. Work is done by paid clergy.	1. Work is done by church members.
2. Institutional maintenance	2. Entrepreneurial Risk-Taking Ministry
3. A haven from the world	3. A mission to the world
4. Top down	4. Bottom up
5. Pastor and leaders as the ministers	5. Pastors and leaders as the equippers
6. A focus upon the weekend meeting	6. A focus upon daily discipleship
7. Control	7. Release

About three years ago after a healing conference, a retired couple in our church named John and Lois Myer felt they wanted to respond to some of the things they saw and heard at the conference. They approached our executive pastor, Craig Heselton, and asked if they could pursue it, and if the church would purchase some training videos. We got the videos and John and Lois Myer began training people through the videos and formed prayer teams for expanded times of prayer for people in need. Right now they have a simple application for anyone who wants to fill out who desire soaking prayer. They now have 22-23 soaking prayer teams who pray for 3 people per session. Every single person gets 45 minutes of focused prayer.

Out of this ministry came a twice monthly healing service led by Joe Kovalcik. Recently there has been a team of women who intercede daily for everyone on the soaking prayer list. We've seen a number of physical healings as a result of this. Just allowing the diversity of gifts and talents to flow.

Ben and Melissa Miller, a couple in the church, saw a need for household and furniture items for incoming refugee families. They found a way to de-clutter their own lives. People who have items to clear out do so and they are recycled through a ministry called "Bigger Barns" to refugees who started out with nothing.

Or how about this? Sher Isaacs was a professional ballroom dancer for 20 years before she joined the Vineyard in the late 90's. She loved the Lord; she loved to dance, but finding a church that combined both loves was pretty hard in Central Ohio. Sher came here and started a dance class. She started with 25 people. This fall, they had 300 folks, 95% of them single, attending their first class. Sher no longer teaches the class. They have a main teacher and a team of assistant teachers. They have several dozen volunteers. This past year, they did a

Purpose Driven Life Series and started Purpose Driven Life groups with a couple hundred single adults.

Expressing the diversity of gifts in the body for the purpose of serving the world is precisely what the community center is all about. I think about the variety of programs, most of them are not top down, centrally planned things. They are arising from the talents of people in the church.

Carol Pence is leading a jobs club to network and support unemployed and underemployed people so that they can have new jobs search techniques.

Frank Gordon, Kent Irwin, and Geoff Best are going to be doing financial planning and debt counseling.

Members of the church lead English as a Second Language classes for adults from a variety of nationalities.

Drew Campbell, along with a number of other attorneys in our church, have started a free legal clinic.

We have seven different dance classes offered by people in the church. Music classes, poetry classes, ceramic classes, art programs, tai kwan do.

Why does Paul refer to the church as the Body of Christ? Because it is indispensable.

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The Body of Christ: Deal with the Big Eyes

Let's read quickly vv. 21-25,

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¹Co 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and 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.

In the previous passage, people felt inferior. They said, "I do not belong." They made comparisons with others in which they came out negatively in comparison. In this passage, people are saying, "I don't need you." They are viewing themselves as superior to other members of the Body.

SLIDE – v. 21

1Co 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”

In v. 22 we read,

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1Co 12:22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

What is Paul referring to by “the weaker parts?” It is likely that he is speaking about our internal organs – our liver, our pancreas, our intestines. It is true that they are less glamorous than your smile or your hair, or even your eyes. But appearances can be deceiving. They only seem to be weaker. The internal organs are absolutely indispensable to the functioning of the body.

So, how would we apply this? Paul’s main point has to do with respecting the diversity of gifts in the church. If we were to apply it to our Sunday morning meeting, we might say that what is obvious here is the worship team that plays, or the pastor who teaches.

But there are 7 volunteers who work the sound board on the weekend. How long do you think we would function in this church without sound?

What do you think would happen here if all of the folks who cleaned up suddenly decided, “We’ve got to stop cleaning up and repairing the plumbing.” How long do you think we could go as a church with good teaching and great worship.

One of my favorite authors is Henri Nouwen, who before his recent death, was a Roman Catholic priest, a professor at Yale, and a psychologist. I want to read to you from an interview with Henri Nouwen conducted before his untimely death. Nouwen says,

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From the beginning of my life, two voices have been speaking to me: one saying, Henri, be sure you make it on your own. Be sure you become an independent person. Be sure I can be proud of you, and another voice saying, Henri, whatever you are going to do, even if you don’t do anything very interesting in the eyes of the world, be sure you stay close to the heart of Jesus; be sure you stay close to the love of God. Early in my life I pleased my father and mother immensely by studying, then teaching, and then becoming somewhat well-known, going to Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard. I pleased a lot of people doing so and also pleased myself. But somewhere on the way up, I wondered if I were still in touch with my vocation. I began noticing this when I found myself speaking to thousands of people about humility and at the same time wondering what they

were thinking of me. I didn't feel peaceful. Actually, I felt lonely. I didn't know where I belonged. I was pretty good on a platform but not always that good in my own heart. I began to wonder if, perhaps, my career hadn't gotten in the way of my vocation. One day I met Gene. We met silently at a retreat in which no words were spoken. At the end, Gene said, "Henri, maybe we – our community of handicapped people – can offer you a home, a place where you are really safe, where you can meet God in a whole new way."

He didn't ask me to be useful; he didn't ask me to work for handicapped people; he didn't need another priest. He simply said, "Maybe we can offer you a home." Gradually, I realized I had to take that call seriously. I left the university and went to L'Arche Community in France. After spending a year in this community of mentally handicapped people and their assistants who try to live in the spirit of the Beatitudes, I responded to the call to become a priest at Daybreak, which is a L'Arche Community near Toronto, a community of about 100: 50 handicapped people and 50 assistants.

The first thing asked of me was to work with Adam (of all names, Adam! It sounded like working with humanity itself.) Adam, a 24-year old, couldn't speak. He couldn't walk. He couldn't dress or undress himself. You never really knew if he recognized you or not. His body was deformed, his back distorted, and he suffered from frequent epileptic seizures. At 7:00 in the morning, I went to his room. I took off his clothes, held him up, and carefully walked with him to the bathroom. I was frightened because I thought he might have a seizure. I struggled to lift him into the bathtub, as he was as heavy as I am. I started to pour water over him, wash him, shampoo his hair, and take him out again to brush his teeth, comb his hair, and return him to his bed. Then I dressed him in what clothes I could find and took him to the kitchen.

I sat him at the table and started to give him his breakfast. The only thing he could do was lift the spoon to his mouth. I sat there and watched him. It took about an hour. I never had been with anyone for a whole hour, just watching to see if he could eat.

Then something transpired: after two weeks, I was a little less frightened. After three or four weeks, it dawned on me that I was thinking a lot about Adam and looking forward to being with him. I realized something was happening between us – something intimate and beautiful that was of God. I don't even know how to say it very well.

This broken man was the place where God was speaking to me in a new way. Little by little, I discovered affection in myself and came to believe that Adam and I belonged together. To put it simply, Adam taught me about God's love in a concrete way.

First he taught me that being is more important than doing, that God wants me to be with him and not do all sorts of things that I'm valuable. My life had been doing, doing. I'm a driven person, wanting to do thousands and thousands of things so that I can show – somehow, finally – that I'm worthwhile. People have said, "Henri, you're OK." But now, here with Adam, I heard, "I don't care what you do, as long as you will be with me." It wasn't easy just to be with Adam. It isn't easy simply to be with a person and not do much.

Adam taught me something else: the heart is more important than the mind. When you've come from a university, that is hard to learn. Mind thinking, having arguments, discussing, writing, doing – that's what a human being is.

Well, Adam didn't think, but Adam had a heart, a real human heart.

All at once I saw what makes a human being human is the heart with which he can give and receive love. Adam was giving me an enormous amount of God's love and I was giving Adam my love. There was an intimacy that went far beyond words or acts.

I also realized Adam wasn't just a disabled person, less human than myself or other people. He was a fully human being, so fully human that he was chosen by God to be the instrument of his love. Adam was so vulnerable, so weak, and so empty that he became just the heart – the heart in which God wanted to dwell, in which he wanted to speak to those who came close to his vulnerable heart. Adam was a full human being, not half human or less human. I discovered that.

I came to understand that Adam, the weakest among us, created community. He it was who brought us together; his needs and his vulnerability made us into a true community. With all our differences, we could not have survived as community if Adam hadn't been there. His weakness became our strength. His weakness made us into a loving community. His weakness invited us to forgive one another, to calm our arguments, to be with him.

As the apostle Paul said in vv. 21-22,

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1Co 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,

This is the Body of Christ. We don't exist simply for Sunday morning meetings. We exist for Christ and for the world. Let's pray.

The Body of Christ

Rich Nathan

October 7-8, 2006

The Beloved Community Series

1 Corinthians 12.12-26

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II. The Body Of Christ: An intimate Relationship With Christ (vv. 12-14)

A. Not Just Ownership Or Task

B. An Intimate Relationship (Eph. 5.30,31)

III. The Body Of Christ: A Place To Belong (vv. 15-20)

A. "I'm Too Broken"

B. "I'm Not As Good As..."

C. "My Gifts Are Not Needed"

IV. The Body Of Christ: Dealing With The Big Eyes (vv. 21-25)