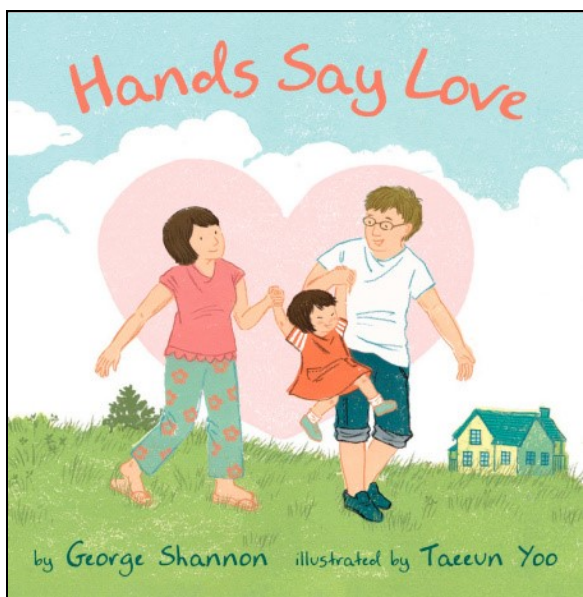


Living Grace

CYCLE B 5TH SUNDAY
ORDINARY TIME

"JESUS, AND PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW,
FREED TO HEAL, FREED TO SERVE!"



Hands Say Love is a celebration of the many hands-on moments we share. Hands touch, hold, and hug. Hands feed, give, and share. Hands create, mend, and heal. Hands say love! Every day, our hands show the most important people in our lives how we care about them, from parents helping children learn to walk, to families playing and working together, to friends waving hello and good-bye. This story reminds us that even the simplest gesture can be a profound expression of love.

The author, George Shannon, described the inspiration for this book: "Like the majority of Mid-western families, mine was not particularly at ease sharing comments of love and affection. I suspect that is why the opening line of Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay "Friendship" not only caught my attention, but also echoed for many years within my thoughts and reflections. "We have a great deal more kindness that is ever spoken." Even if we don't verbalize our love for one another, the simple actions of care and kindness each day demonstrate our emotions. And, I've come to believe, the doing is more truthful than merely saying the words.

Sunday Gospel

MARK 1:29-39

On leaving the synagogue
Jesus entered the house of Simon and Andrew
with James and John.
Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever.
They immediately told him about her.
He approached, grasped her hand,
and helped her up.
Then the fever left her and she waited on them.

When it was evening, after sunset,
they brought to him all who were ill or possessed
by demons.
The whole town was gathered at the door.
He cured many who were sick with various diseases,
and he drove out many demons,
not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left
and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.
Simon and those who were with him pursued him
and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you."
He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages
that I may preach there also.
For this purpose have I come."
So he went into their synagogues,
preaching and driving out demons throughout the
whole of Galilee.

Read-aloud video link:
[HANDS SAY LOVE](#)
Written by George Shannon & Illustrated by Taeun Yoo

Art & Faith

EXPLORING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



HEALING THE SICK
Metal Relief Detail of Bronze Doors by Ulrich Henn - 2008
St. James Cathedral - Seattle, Washington, USA

EXPLORING THE ART:

The ceremonial bronze doors at St. James Cathedral in Seattle depict the journey of humanity towards the heaven. One of the doors has images of the Old Testament and the other side has images of the New Testament. The story begins with Adam and Eve's leaving the Garden of Eden, Moses and the burning bush and then the parting of the sea. The New Testament door begins with Jesus' baptism, his healing the sick, Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and ends with an image of Jesus carrying the cross to Calvary.

Ulrich Henn is a German artist who, while growing up, was never what one might call artistic. He took only one art class as a boy, and he now admits that he often turned in his brother's drawings! But everything changed with the Second World War. When the war ended, Henn was a prisoner of war in an American prison camp outside Naples. At Christmastime, yearning for something to remind him of family, home, and the holiday, Henn began to carve a Christmas manger. His materials were simple - old ammunition boxes and razor blades. After 17 months in prison camp, during which time his only book was the Bible, Henn returned to Germany with the practical idea of studying chemistry, but there was no money to go to the university. A sculptor happened to look at some of the pieces Henn had created in prison camp, saw great promise, and gave him a set of tools. Henn got a job in the workshop of a wood carver, and the idea of sculpting as a career gradually seemed more and more possible.

Just as his career as a sculptor in wood was beginning to grow, an accident Henn badly injured his left hand, severing the tendons. He was told he could not sculpt in wood or stone for two years. It seemed like the end, but in fact, it was the beginning. Since he could no longer sculpt in wood, Henn began to work in wax, the malleable substance with which the bronze casting process begins. Looking back, he sees God at work in his life at that time: "Any cut, in your life, not only in your hand," Henn says, "can work out, possibly much better than you ever thought." What had seemed catastrophic proved to be a major turning-point in his career, for it was in bronze that Henn truly found his gift as an artist. Henn's sculptures, which include fountains, crucifixes, chandeliers, and some 30 sets of bronze doors, can be found all over Germany. His works in the U.S. are the bronze doors and St. James Cathedral in Seattle (above) and the great bronze gates of the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

SPEAKING OF HANDS

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD

HANDS THAT HEAL ARE HANDS THAT SERVE, AND HANDS THAT SERVE ARE HANDS THAT HEAL!

Jesus' way is beginning to get a lot of attention. His teaching begins to stir hearts, people are beginning to follow in crowds, and the word is beginning to spread. In last week's Gospel, we learned that Jesus' words could activate, stir, and heal hearts. In this week's Gospel, we learn that in addition to healing words, he also has healing touch. In fact, his touch activates the heart and heals the body both. This was beginning to get Jesus a lot of attention, and it was creating an enormous ripple effect in the lives of his followers and the community in the region of Galilee.

Jesus teaches about building of the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God, love is the new law. What does that look like? The Israelite people had many laws to guide them in righteous living. But as Jesus reveals the "love of God", not the just the "laws of God", people are inspired to follow God with their "whole being". Empowered by the Holy Spirit, their whole being becomes a proclamation of God's love and desire to redeem all of humanity - this is the Good News! Following Jesus creates a "fullness of being" in response to God's love. As Jesus calls people forth into this fullness of being, people are being healed and freed from sickness, sin, and the influence of evil. The law protected people, but love liberates people. Healing and serving are the means of love. Here we see Jesus demonstrate this healing, serving, and loving with his hands.

Our children's story, *Hands Say Love*, illustrates this concept beautifully. Sometimes, it is through the simplest gestures in family life communicated in repetitive daily ways that our eyes see and experience love in our families. Sometimes it just takes the art of noticing. When our hearts are hardened, it is very difficult for our hands to reach out to offer love and healing. Gentle actions and loving kindness can reactivate the heart in amazing ways. Scientific studies prove that a revitalized heart can bring healing of mind, body, and spirit. Thus, there are many ways to remove demons that have found ways to become lodged within our lives, homes, and relationships.

Through Jesus' touch, Peter's mother-in-law is freed to bring honor to Peter and her family through her committed love and service to their guests. Love and healing continues through sharing a meal together. The meal cements their friendship - they are filled and strengthened to serve. In times of eating and serving we, too, grow bonds of love. We grow in "communion" with each other.

YOUR STORY: What are ways you serve your family with your hands? Is it always easy to serve others? What gets in the way of you doing so? Do you sometimes need help being generous or having a good attitude? Can a bad attitude bring a whole group down? How do you think Jesus can help you when you have a bad attitude?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: What are some things the adults are doing with their hands? What are some things the kids are doing with their hands? Those are things we can "do" with our hands - what can we "say" with our hands?

THE GOSPEL STORY: How did Jesus use his hands? How did Peter's mother-in-law respond? When Jesus healed people and chased away evil, how did people respond?

Kindness and helping others work to bring a change of heart and attitude if someone is feeling hardened and unkind. Kindness is contagious! Through acts of service to each other, we can grow families and communities of love and kindness.



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Discuss as a family how we can work to use our hands in service of others. How might our doing so help chase away darkness and evil by growing love and kindness?

CHARACTER QUALITIES: HEARTS TO HANDS
LIBERATING LOVE

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Do some research on Catholic Service Organizations in your area. Make a list and read about the mission of each one. How do they put their hearts to hands in serving the needs in your community? Choose one organization that is a good fit for your family. Find out how you can get involved with your hearts and your hands.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: The beginning of Jesus' ministry begins in Capernaum. There have been wonderful archeological digs done in this area, and it is an exciting place to learn about. Capernaum sits on the Sea of Galilee. It is a very pastoral setting with open fields and lake views, so it was easy for large crowds to gather in the open fields and mountains create natural amphitheatres. The archeological work has uncovered this very synagogue that Jesus taught in, as well as Peter's house. Most likely Peter's house was a gathering place of the early church, as bigger gathering places were added all around the original house. This is one of the scriptures that truly comes to life when you walk in through the Holy Land. Even today, people can actually walk out of the synagogue and into Peter's house - just like Jesus did! - as Mark describes in this Gospel.

TERMS: *Peter's house* In the first century, a wife would always move into her husband's father's house. Sons live with their fathers even after marriage. They would have a place of their own in a large housing complex. Peter's mother-in-law must have had some extenuating circumstances to have ended up in Peter's house. During biblical times, to have no place to live was a fate worse than any sickness, even worse than death.

Healer To examine Jesus as a healer, take a look at the contemporary medical distinction between disease and illness. Disease is defined as a biomedical malfunction that afflicts an organism. Illness is a disvalued human condition in which social networks are ruptured and life's meaning is lost. Curing is aimed at disease, and it is a rare occurrence. Healing is aimed at illness, and it occurs infallibly all the time for all people. Jesus, as a healer, offers people a path to find new meaning in life. Jesus is also gifted with the ability to heal disease, but that is rarer. The Kingdom of God restores belonging, then people are able to move from compromised living to thriving.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: Jesus takes her hand. Still today, people in the Mediterranean world are used to a great deal of social and bodily contact. They live, work, and eat in very close proximity of each other. Jesus' touch mediates power and belonging. Jesus reaches out to Peter's mother-in-law, and in doing so re-establishes her relevancy in the social network. By noticing the least and bringing them front and center, Jesus brings society's outcasts from shame to a place of honor. Healing this woman's status in the society ensures her physical health and wellbeing from then on. Jesus reaches out to heal not just people's bodies, but also to restore their human dignity. By restoring her status in society, he restored her system of nurturing and care.

It would be wonderful if our faith communities today could understand the relevancy in doing this for others. When Peter's healed mother-in-law gets up and immediately begins to serve, it demonstrates (like the lepers in other stories of healing) a depth of gratitude that must be expressed. Jesus healed much more than just a fever. He restored human dignity by bringing an outcast woman back into the heart of community and family life.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: Jesus shows us the path of redeeming the world and bringing heaven to earth. No one can be cast aside and left without care or meaning. Meaning in life, and connection with others, is where true healing lies. Here Jesus demonstrates the path of redemption. As bridges of love and care for the disenfranchised are restored, all will be well, all will be cared for. That is the kind of radical healing that Jesus puts front and center of his mission. Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God is here and now, and in this Gospel, in Peter's house (the rock), he demonstrates how it works!