

I come to you in the name of one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“See what love the father has given us, that we should be called children of God and that is what we are.”

This is perhaps the hardest thing to accept in our faith.

Jesus rises from death. Jesus conquers death. The disciples come to know this and accept Jesus as risen, when he appears amongst them, when he offers his flesh to be seen, to be touched, they accept Jesus has accomplished what he set out to do, they accept that the reality of the world has forever been altered. Us, in our tradition, have followed the example of the disciples and accepted that Jesus is risen. We honor this salvific act and victory over death by celebrating Easter for a whole season, not just one day. We fully accept Jesus when he proclaims to the disciples, to us, “see that it is I myself.” If this was the hardest part of our faith to accept, there’d be a lot fewer of us around I think.

No, what is inherently difficult in our faith is to accept that Jesus conquered death, rose from the dead, appeared to the disciples in holy and unexpected ways, because we are children of God, because, even though we have done nothing to deserve it, we are forgiven anyways, we are called by name anyways, we are loved, anyways.

Now, it may seem a bit rudimentary to proclaim we are children of God. We learn at an early age from our Sunday School songs that Jesus loves me for the Bible tells me so, that Father Abraham had many sons and that I am one of them, we learn from an early age that we are children of God. But, I think we fall into a trap as we grow older, pushing aside what we deeply know from our earliest experiences of church, pushing aside “childish” understandings of God, ignoring the message at the heart of theologically questionable

children's songs. I don't know why we do this. I don't know why we demand more and more of our faith, to answer in great detail very specific questions based on extreme hypotheticals, when we can simply accept that this has all happened, that this all continues to happen, because we are children of God. I mean, look around at our world and ask yourself, have we, have I, truly accepted that we are children of God?

Do you know the people sitting next to you? In front and behind you? Do you know the families that sit in the South Transept? Or those who prefer the back pews of the nave?

All of these people are children of God, and yet, you do not know all of these people. No matter how much you might disagree on sports or politics or religion or the best hymn in the 1982 hymnal or the level of commitment to this place or the way we use our vast resources or differences in personal piety, we are all children of God. It doesn't even matter if you judge people who are here, for their appearance, for their perceived intelligence, for who they love, for how they worship, for what they believe about gun violence or abortion or protecting the environment, we are all children of God.

And, that's why this is the hardest thing in our faith to accept.

No matter what you believe about another person in this place, right now, today, they are a child of God and you are a child of God. They, and you, have both received God's grace, love, forgiveness, through Jesus Christ. This can be really hard to accept. It is much easier to dislike, to dismiss, those we disagree with, those we don't respect, those we refuse to see. And yet, we are called by God as God's children. All of us. No exceptions.

And maybe you can accept this fact, begrudgingly though it may be, but how do you then acknowledge this reality, this presence of God, of Christ, in every. single. person. Here.

And, if we can't do that, if we can't do that with the people we see every week, that we share the intimate act of eating at a common table together, then how can we possibly see that strangers are also children of God, that our crazy conservative or loony liberal family and friends are children of God, that the intellectual atheist and the disenfranchised convict are equal children of God.

For the disciples, the reality was clear, it was right in front of their face, Jesus said "touch me and see" and they could, and they did, and they shared this first-hand experience and began to spread this earth-shaking reality, that we are the children of God, and we are saved through the acts of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, we've forgotten that we can still reach out and touch Christ. We've forgotten that Christ is right here in front of us, waiting to be seen.

As children of God, Christ is within each and every one of us. We are called by name, we are saved through Christ, we are empowered in the Spirit, it is the light within each and everyone of us, no matter how dim we might perceive it at times. But, how are we to reach out and touch Jesus, to touch and see, if we're unwilling to touch each other because we don't acknowledge the reality of each individual as a beloved child of God deserving of our touch.

This is where our intellectual faith must meet the physical actions of our faith. This is where we are called to do more than simply be. This is where we are called to live into the example of ministry left by Christ, to humble ourselves, to serve. It is when we do this, when we reach out to others, not because we have pity upon them but because we see them

as who they are, a beloved child of God, this is where we can encounter Christ, this is where we can touch and see.

This is why I think this is the hardest part of our faith to accept.

If we accept that we are all children of God, then how can we excuse the fact that our brothers and sisters are homeless? How can we excuse the fact that veterans disproportionately are homeless and committing suicide at epidemic rates? How can we excuse the fact that guns whose sole purpose is to kill human beings very efficiently are available on the public market with little to no regulation? How can we excuse cyber-bullying, violent, misogynistic threats, for daring to be a voice for the voiceless in public forums? How can we excuse the systematic murder of black americans by our police? How can we accept this world?

If we truly accepted that all are children of God, we couldn't accept this. We wouldn't accept this. And, we'd do something about it.

We are witnesses to Christ present in our world today. We are witnesses to Christ present in each and every person. We are witnesses to the reality that we are beloved children of God. And as witnesses, we must follow in the example of the disciples. We can't be silent, we can't be on the sidelines, we have to share this reality-shifting knowledge. We have to go out into the world and draw others into the knowledge of the new reality that is made clear in the act of Christ, in the victory of Christ, in the gift of God's love and forgiveness for us. We are responsible for changing this world because we are responsible for our brothers and sisters.

It will only be through our efforts to fight back against the evils of this world, to fight back against that which is intended to divide, to fight back against that which is intended to harm, that we will be able to know Christ's presence among us here and now, because if we fight back, we can't help but touch each other, we can't help but touch our brothers and sisters, and in touching, we can't help but see the reality of Christ's victory over death.

If we can all come together each week and eat at this table together, then we can do so with both the acceptance of the knowledge of our equal status as children of God and the acknowledgement that this reality means something, that this reality calls us to do something in this world so that all of our brothers and sisters can also come to the table and eat with no restrictions and no exceptions, so that all of our brothers and sisters can also touch and see, so that we can continually touch and see Christ in our midst.

It just might be the hardest part of our faith to accept, but we are children of God, and whether we asked for it, whether we deserve it or not, it is the reality of who we are, it is the reality that drives the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Amen.