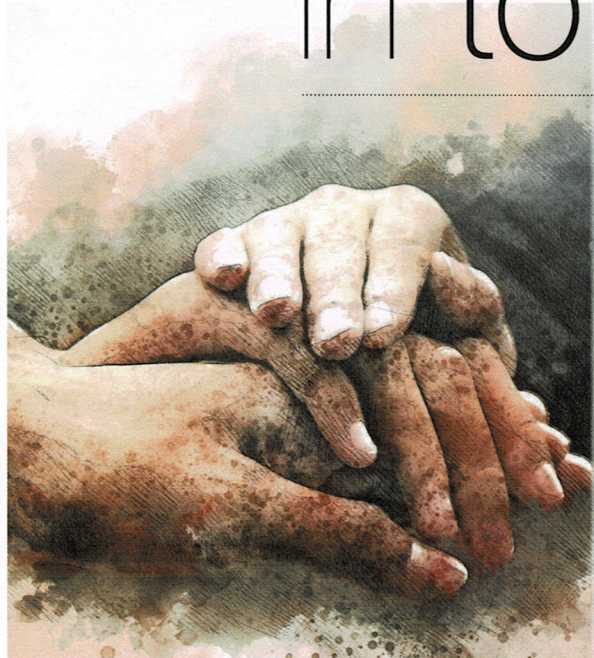


SUNDAY PLUS

The reality of love

In touch



By Lucy Russell

We might hear the idiom “out of touch” about a person who isn’t informed or doesn’t have the same ideas as most people about something. It’s also a phrase which means we no longer see or communicate with someone. Being “out of touch with reality” is more serious. It describes a mental state where you feel detached from your surroundings which seem unreal. In these examples touch itself isn’t a feature.

The power of touch is extraordinary. Touch causes the brain to release oxytocin and stimulates the release of other feel-good hormones at the same time as reducing stress hormones. Physical contact from someone you care about makes you feel safe. Touch is the first sense we acquire.

As human beings we have a need to touch and be touched. It’s vital to successful relationships, including our relationship with God who touches us through the sacraments and through the loving touch of another person.

The Gospel makes clear that the resurrected Jesus was truly human. The reality of Christ’s love is

tangible. “Tangible” means being understood by the sense of touch. Something that is tangible is physically real and can be touched. “See by my hands and my feet that it is myself” said Jesus to his confused and frightened friends. “Touch me and see for yourselves...” Touch me and see. Touch me and understand. Be informed of – and in touch with – the reality of my existence and my love for you. You are safe. All will be well.

Lucy Russell is the author of “Who Do I Say I Am?”, available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

“See my hands and my feet,” Jesus says. To look is not only to see, it is more; it also involves intention. Looking is a first step against indifference, against the temptation to look the other way before the difficulties and sufferings of others. To look. Do I see or look at Jesus?

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Sunday 16 April

St Bernadette
of Lourdes
(1844-1879)

St Bernadette had asthma. Interestingly, her biographers mention that she suffered from the condition before meeting Our Lady at the rock of Massabielle in Lourdes – and are

silent about any adult asthma attacks. Did she grow out of it? Did Bernadette herself receive the first cure when she obeyed Our Lady’s instructions to bathe her face in the muddy pool, which became the miraculous spring and future pilgrimage destination of millions of people? Was it such a normal part of her life that biographers overlook asthma when writing about Bernadette’s other health issues which led to her death at the age of thirty-five?

Anybody who is familiar with asthma, either personally or through a family member, knows the limitations on activities – including allergenic foods – and freedoms which everybody else enjoys.

As we remember St Bernadette, perhaps it is also an opportunity to remember and pray for all those who suffer from asthma.



The power of touch

By Neil Foley


The power of human touch can never be underestimated. Think about the intimate caress between two lovers silently conveying their affection for one another; the gentle handhold of a nurse caring for a dying patient

communicating the ebbing physical connection of this world; the firm hand on the shoulder of the defeated sports player telling them that they will rise and compete again.

As a parent of small children, I think of the kiss that must be administered to the scuffed knee making everything better. “Touch me and see for yourselves” Jesus says. His resurrection is bodily and real, not some lofty idea or ghostly apparition.

His resurrection is rooted in our physical world, our world of touch and intimacy and pain. Our bodies will be part of the new heaven and new earth. Our touch matters. How do we extend that touch here and now so that it lasts in all eternity?

Neil Foley is a lay missionary with the Redemptorists in Ireland. He lives in Wexford with his wife, Helen, and twin girls, Zélie and Martha, where he also works fulltime as an environmental scientist.

Jesus, I want to see you. Open my eyes so that I can see you in everything that I say, think and do. Let me see you in everybody I meet.  Amen.

Today:
Acts 3:13-15, 17-19
1 John 2:1-5
Luke 24:35-48

Monday:
Acts 6:8-15
John 6:22-29

Tuesday:
Acts 7:51 – 8:1
John 6:30-35

Wednesday:
Acts 8:1-8
John 6:35-40

Thursday:
Acts 8:26-40
John 6:44-51

Friday:
Acts 9:1-20
John 6:52-59

Saturday:
Acts 9:31-42
John 6:60-69

Next Sunday:
Acts 4:8-12
1 John 3:1-2
John 10:11-18