

There have been many Important events in our nation's History this week:

- **Supreme court decisions on same sex civil marriages**
- **Supreme court decision on national health care**
- **Probably the most important was the burial of the pastor of the North Carolina killed with nine other church members at their weekly bible study, and the phenomenal response of the community of faith, which I would like to speak at length at a later time.**

Yes it has been a very eventful week.

But there was another event, one not reported by CNN or newspapers on the internet. If it was reported, the headline would be the liberation of a sidewalk.

For four days this past week, 20 youth from the Catholic Heart Work Camp arrived at Corpus Christi to help clean up the neighborhood. A number of our members assisted them in the work. Colleen Flaherty, Brian Jennings and Winona Handshu's mother, and Greg Spight. There was another woman from the neighborhood who also helped. Her name is Joyce Daniels. As we explained the project of restoring our

community, Joyce announced that the youth were going to liberate a sidewalk!

Well at first we all just laughed. It seems that a sidewalk the length of a city block behind the old Arnold Nursing Home had been overgrown for years. Vines grew over the walk; two inches of dirt and weeds were on top of the cement, it was riddled with empty liquor bottles and other refuse. One empty Dorito package was so old that over the years, the bright red outside of the paper had been bleached white by the sun. And so we began to “liberate” the sidewalk, cutting down the vines, picking up the refuse and shoveling off the sidewalk.

To my surprise, Joyce really knew what she was talking about. You see, since youth in our community could not walk on the sidewalk, they used to walk in the street. Police would pass seeing the teens walking in the street and arrest them for loitering and, for some, that would begin a long history with the law, incarceration and prison.

As the youth were cleaning off the sidewalk, a woman with grey hair, easily in her sixties, came out of one of the houses and began to help them. She took hold of a shovel and worked for four hours along side of the youth. She was truly being freed to change the tone of her neighborhood. A few hours later, a young woman carrying a child in arms, came over to the youth and offered them bottles of cold water.

Her face was aglow with a smile and her eyes overflowed with tears of joy because she was being liberated from the feelings of living in a forgotten and neglected neighborhood.

Yes, this past week, a group of youth from the Catholic Heart Work Camp came and liberated a sidewalk in our community, and freed many other souls in the process. They touched a neighborhood, and the neighborhood touched them.

I mention this liberation because today's gospel speaks about liberation from fear and anxiety and disease. It speaks of the healing power of people touching and being touched.

We hear how Jesus, like the teens this past week, allowed himself to come where the people were. He is in the midst of the crowd when a man named Jairus approaches him and asks in his fear and anxiety and despair for Jesus to come and cure his daughter who is dying.

Jesus, the compassionate one, is ready to help him but requires one thing of him...that he have faith. He has to believe that Jesus can liberate his daughter from "disease".

In the midst of talking with the man, a woman in the crowd, weakened by the flow of blood for years and made poor by doctors not able to cure her, approaches Jesus. "If only I can touch him, I will

be liberated from this “disease”! She is a woman filled with faith. And Jesus immediately cures her.

(Pause)

Yes, in today’s gospel Jesus touches and is touched. He heals by touch. He restores bodies and liberates hearts. Touching is a powerful way of liberating and healing. There is a story told about medical students who were in a class and the instructor stated how touching patients could actually help the healing process. The instructor then asked the interns to pair off and ask their partner to let them know where they carried pain in their bodies and simply place their hand over the pain. One young man who did not believe much in this “healing through touching” asked his partner for the exercise where she was in pain. She mentioned she carried much pain in her back. He placed his hand over her pained area for a few minutes and she felt much relieved. Then she asked him where he carried pain. He pointed to his heart. She carefully placed her hand on his heart for a few minutes. He had been carrying lots of pain from a recent divorce and, as his partner lovingly held her hand over his heart, he felt release of pain

...touching and being touched...

Isn't that why we pick up and hug a child who is in pain? We do not take away the physical pain but we can remove the pain of feeling isolated and alone in or pain.

Yes, Jesus came to heal; he came to liberate us from sin and suffering and death. And he calls us his disciples to carry on the ministry of liberation. That is what the young people who helped out this past week learned. It is what many of us have learned in our journey of life. One of the young people helping out this week wrote a note of thanks to me. I would like to share a part of it with you.

Fr. Don, Thank you so much for letting us come work with y'all this week. I am looking forward to coming back to Detroit some time and to see a Tiger's game and maybe stop by! For sure, I want to see the sidewalk that we liberated and some of the houses we cleared out for grass cutting and the community garden again. Thanks again for letting us help y'all out!! You have inspired me to amply my faith!

Lexi Hass Catholic Heart Work Camp, 2015

May we, who have been touched by the Lord, lead lives which bring liberation and healing to others.

