

What's in a Face ?
HOMILY – October 16, 2005
The Rev'd Colleen Spaeth – Deacon

In today's Gospel we find Jesus seemingly trapped between a rock and hard place. We find him being sweet-talked to by his wanna-be pals, the Pharisees & Herodians, two sides that have come together hopefully to trip Jesus up.

It's interesting to watch two factions bond together to bring Jesus down. Hey Jesus, we think you're cool, sincere even, teaching the way of God - no partiality – you're hip, no kiddin! So tell us – pal Jesus – is it okay to pay our taxes to the emperor or not?

But Jesus, he's up to the challenge, he can smell a snake, he knows these are temporary friends, and when they ask their questions, he gives them back more than they bargained for, and really never really answers their specific question,

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but goes deeper, turns the tables on them with – give to the
guy who thinks he's in charge what is his – and give to God
that which is God's.

He quiets his questioners, and they quietly slink away, we
hope to a better life.

Jesus asked about an image. Let's think about that for a bit.

Are we not made in the image of God? Shouldn't that
mean that everyone is made in the image of God – even the
emperor? Is it not so that no matter whether we are
functioning socially, economically, politically, or
religiously we are first and foremost children of God made
in God's image, and therefore God's property maybe?

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The drama may not answer all questions of what it means to be both a citizen in society & a Christian, it may not resolve every dilemma about obedience and taxation & resistance. But I wonder, might it help make clear a moral inquiry that maybe should take first place, and that is “Do I give myself to God? Am I in a right relationship to God?”

In calling the questioners hypocrites, Jesus brings up a more pointed example: in whose image are YOU made of? Is your manner of life worthy of the image of God in which you are made? Do you bear the title of God's chosen with humility and respect for one another? They are baffled by his words for sure.

This week in the church calendar we celebrate the feast of

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St. Luke, the Physician, and today we celebrate those in the health professions. I tried to capture the description of a health care professional – of course the obvious – doctors, nurses, therapists, many others, but I wonder if the circle isn't wider – while not “professional” in the sense of course, there's moms, dads, grandmoms, big sisters, big brothers, priests - hey maybe even deacons. What is it health care folk do ? Well, they make one better, don't they? And how do they do that?

I think the biggest gift someone in the health care profession can give us is the gift of touch.

They say that when you are gone no one will remember a word you said, but they will remember how you made them feel. I don't know about you, but when someone who cares

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for me touches me, even just the slightest touch, I feel better. When someone comes from their space into mine with the purpose of being in my space and understanding me for just a second, no matter how I felt before, I am now a little better.

Try it. Care about someone – care about what the someone may be going through and using the power of touch, convey to the person your healing touch. Touch is universal, it crosses all language barriers, we just have to care, and then care enough to touch.

I have been strengthened in my own life with the use of Reiki, a gift of touch, of guided spiritual touch, warm, loving, prayerful touch. What kind of world could we

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create if as one image of God we reached out to another image of God, our sisters and brothers?

I believe that we are all empowered to heal each other, I believe that God is calling us to be all of who we are, to discover for ourselves who and what claims are beings.

As some of you may know, my 82 year old mom is sick with esophageal cancer. Up until three weeks ago, she was working full time in a hospital, driving a car, living independently and strong willed. Her cancer has caused her for now to go out on disability, and she lives with my older sister in Trenton, requiring care and transportation to her daily radiation and weekly chemo treatments. She is all of a sudden weak and sometimes sad.

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After some prayer and wrestling with my God I have decided to take some time off from my duties here at Grace so that I can help my two sisters in Trenton with her care. With my availability on the weekends, my sisters will be able to get a break, and I will be able to spend some time with my Mom. It is not a decision that has been hard to make, and I know that you will understand it. I have been humbled by my church family at Grace. You have opened up your hearts to me as well as your stories and your homes. You have trusted me with your greatest gifts, your children.

I ask one thing – your prayers, your prayers for my Mom Faye, and my family as we travel down this road. Please know that I go with joy in my heart and expectation,

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expectation of company, the company of my creator God,
the company of prayer and touch, healing touch, in
whatever way that will look.

In the end we are all called to God, and no matter how good
the care my mom gets, one day she too will come face to
face with her God. It's just right now the gift, the gift if I
dare call it, the gift of cancer has called me to spend more
time with the person that gave me life, and I leave with the
Words of Paul, rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks
in all circumstances – for this is the way of God in Christ
Jesus for you.

Amen.