

March 8

Holy Communion – Even the Lone Ranger Had Tonto

I am old enough to have grown up watching reruns of the television show *The Lone Ranger*, but not old enough to have ever heard the original radio broadcast from Detroit in the 1930s and 1940s. Reading about the origin of the radio series, the authors plotted that it would be the Native American Indian Tonto, who would discover the only remaining surviving ranger of six, who had been ambushed. Tonto nursed the ranger back to health, and gave him the name “Lone Ranger” because he’s was the only surviving ranger of the bunch. The two became inseparable. Their relationship, trust, specific gifts, and availability to each other was absolutely necessary for the success of their endeavor.

America has this cultural legacy of “rugged independence.” Certainly there are elements of this that are noble and good. Jesus always described the Church as being in the minority. The Old Testament emphasizes the fact that the people of God were referred to as a “remnant.” Remaining faithful when significantly outnumbered and in the minority is both courageous and yet difficult. We need others.

This is why God made special provision for the small communities of the Old Testament 12 tribes of Israel, and the New Testament Church, to remain in *communion* - with each other and with the Lord.

I have often heard people in the church say, “I don’t need to go to church to be a Christian.” That is really not a true statement. Not only is there a Commandment about worship (“**Remember the Sabbath Day**”), but one cannot commune yourself. God set it up that way so that the Church would have to live in community. The stewards of those mysteries are pastors (1 Corinthians 4:1).

The www and COVID have further driven America into a more isolationist mentality. We hear tragic reports of multiple suicides even at small schools like WPI, which are certainly related to isolation and feeling overwhelmed. The Lone Ranger was found “overwhelmed” and just barely surviving.

God is the One Who found us spiritually dead, and physically dying. He brings us suddenly back to a new life with a watery rebirth. He remains by our side, nurturing us, but additionally gives us a new tribe in which to live with a new mission: to live in a faithful community, love God through loving your neighbor, extend the community through sharing His mission, and inviting others into the community.

God also gave us a very special meal, His meal of mercy and fellowship. In order to truly celebrate this meal of Thanksgiving (the “Eucharist”), genuine faith in the Host and Feast would need to be present. It was to be a “Holy” Communion. This sacred/distinct meal would include the Lord, and His children. It is a family meal of the baptized and catechized believers. The conversation around the meal is the Word of the Host and the love expressed by His children living in communion with each other – confessing their sins to one another (James 5:16) and forgiving one another (Eph. 4:32).

This is a “Holy Communion” indeed! No one is lone. We are in communion and community. And I believe God said “**Do this...**” (!) To be a Christian we must be in communion.

Prayer: *Lord God, even You live in community in the Holy Trinity. May we seek those who are lone or lonely to be in this vital holy communion – Your Church. May people be hungry for the Holy Communion You offer us in Eucharist. May we do this often, so that we never feel isolated from You, or Your Church. In Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen.*