

According to the calendar, summer will be over in a couple more weeks. But for most people, summer ended after Labor Day, when school starts. Visits to the beach will have to wait for next summer - or maybe a trip to Florida. Swimming moves from an outdoor activity to an indoor activity ... at least for the next several months.

While swimming is fun and usually safe, each year nearly 3,500 individuals die from accidental drowning.

Lifeguards and other first responders are aware that there are two very distinct phases of drowning. The first is called *aquatic distress*. This is what most people associate with drowning - a person cries out for help, and waves their arms over their head. Yet the next phase of drowning occurs when a person can no longer catch their breath, and is called the *instinctive drowning response*. It is an involuntary reflex as the body's own defenses kick in to try to save the victim. The head tilts back, and the eyes stare upward; and the arms move to the side and press down.

Yet we are conditioned by movies and television to assume a quiet person in the water is no longer in distress; and most people will make the mistaken judgement that everything is all right.

Rescue personnel - first responders and lifeguards - recognize this terminal phase of drowning; while the majority of individuals do not.

In today's readings, we hear the prophetic voice of Isaiah and the Psalmist proclaiming that the blind, the deaf, the lame, and the mute ... the oppressed, the hungry, and captives ... will be restored by a mighty and transformative work of the Lord, God Almighty ... in their lives.

In the Gospel, we hear of this prophecy being fulfilled by Our Lord, Jesus Christ, as he moved through the crowds in the outlying areas of Galilee. And, indeed, Our Lord, Himself, is the fulfillment of the prophecies we heard in the First Reading and the Psalm.

Yet, again, in the Letter of St. James, he challenges his listeners ... and us as well ... to not make mistaken judgements regarding the silent individuals with whom we interact and whom we see every day.

The Church - and that is, us - are the members of Christ's Body. Not as a figure-of-speech, but in fact. Through our Baptism, we are made members of that Body, and by our Confirmation are sent out into the world ... to be the hands and heart ... the voice and ears and eyes ... of Jesus Christ.

In essence, we are called by our membership in Christ to be the first responders in a world filled with those suffering from various spiritual and physical deprivations ... those who are drowning in sorrow and sin ... those who are dying to know the love of God and to share in the redemption we already know in Christ ... and we are sent ... to be a transforming influence in their lives ... in the name of Our Lord and Savior ... Jesus Christ.

It is part and parcel of our Baptismal calling - to see people and situations in a different way ... to judge with the Heart of Christ ... and not the heart of the world. To bring grace and mercy and love ... with us ... out ... into our everyday existence ... out into the world.

We are called to be the Light of Christ to those blinded to the love of God; to be the Prophetic Voice to those deafened by the strident shouts of a noisy and often confused world. Through our proclamation of the Good News - in the words we speak and the actions we do and by the example we set - we are sent forth to free those captive to addictions and cycles of poverty ... and to feed those hungry for the truth - the Gospel Truth - the Truth that is not an idea - but a person - found in the person of Jesus Christ.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us receive from this holy table the graces necessary to transform our own selves ... so that we may go forth from this place ... to transform the world ... hungry for the Gospel ... desperate for the Way, the Truth, and the Life ... a world that we are called to transform as members of the Body of Christ ... daughters and sons of the Father, redeemed by the Precious Blood of the Son, and filled with the grace and power of the Holy Spirit.