

“ONE BODY IN CHRIST”
SUNDAY ORDINARY 27 B – BY DEACON FRANK WILLIAMS
FOR OCTOBER 4, 2015 – CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

In 2005, Adam Greenberg reached his dream of becoming a major league baseball player.

In uniform for the Chicago Cubs, he stepped up to the plate for his first ever at-bat. But—in an instant – tragedy struck.

On the very first pitch, Adam was struck in the back of the head by a 92 mph fast ball. Falling to the ground, he only remembers clutching his head thinking he was about to lose his life.

And to add insult to injury, he was never officially credited with a major league at-bat.

Adam survived the pitch, but the recovery was difficult.

For months, he suffered from vertigo, blurred vision, and migraine headaches. He fell into a dark depression.

Sure, his physical life didn't end as a result of that fateful pitch, but life as he knew it *did* end. His dream of playing major league baseball had died.

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After many months of rehabilitation Adam was healthy enough to play minor league baseball. Yet, despite this impressive comeback, the big leagues were once again only the stuff of dreams.

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Seven years later however, redemption came. Out of nowhere, support for Adam was kindled by fans who mounted what they called the “One at Bat” campaign.

A petition of over 20,000 signatures was sent to major league team owners requesting that a major league franchise sign Adam to “one at bat”--- one more chance for Adam to achieve his dream.

No sooner was the petition received than a major league team contacted him and signed him to play in one game.

Interviewed about this amazing turn of events, Adam said this, “The big story in all this wasn't my injury. It wasn't even my coming back to the big leagues. This story is really about the fans, and the goodness of the human spirit.”

Well put. The goodness of God sometimes reveals itself in the most unexpected ways—in this case, between an obscure baseball player and thousands of fans who supported him.

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Our Gospel today makes the same case. In this instance, the context is marriage. And it is tempting to hear these readings as ordinary marriage instruction, demanding spouses to hold on to one another no matter the cost.

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But is marriage the only way we hear these readings?

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Maybe instead we should hear in them powerful images of what it feels like to be “one body,” not just in marriage but as the People of God. “. . . Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”

But do we really feel in our bones, that we are one body, one flesh, mingled with Christ in Communion, just as the water and wine mingle in the chalice we share? We are one. We are inseparable.

These readings point us to realities beyond marriage, challenging us to deepen our fidelity to one another and to Christ as members of his One Body.

Yes, it is a hard teaching for all of us, not just those struggling with marriage.

Are we torn open by the sufferings of our brothers and sisters?

Do we weep for each other as we would weep for a beloved spouse?

We are no longer two, but one flesh. ¹

Within our parish, we’ve had those who, through the death of a spouse, have experienced the deep pain of having half of that “one body” no longer with them in that same close way. It’s indeed a deep loss.

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The Year of Mercy called for by Pope Francis is a time for each of us to renew our call to be One Body in the Lord.

It is a year for our church doors to open wider so that all humankind can better see and hear the Good News we celebrate.

It is a year for us to notice the work of The Holy Spirit that we saw last week in the visit of Pope Francis to our country.

It is time to notice where the Kingdom of God *has* taken shape in our midst, and even more importantly *where it has yet to be built*.

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In our simple gifts of bread and wine, we recognize that the whole of life reveals the goodness of God, even when that goodness is sometimes overlooked by you and me. God continues to redeem God’s people.

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After Communion, the presider will pray these words “*Grant us, almighty God that we may be refreshed and nourished by the sacrament which we have received, so as to be transformed into what we consume.*”

The Divine Food that we eat at Communion is not changed into us. We are changed into it.

We truly are invited to become what we eat. One Body in Christ.

¹ Michelle Francl-Donnay – writer for CatholicPhilly.com of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia