

WE ARE ONE BODY

Right after emerging from this desert experience, Jesus proceeded to his hometown synagogue in Nazareth. He was handed the scroll from the prophet Isaiah and found the place where it is written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed, go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”*

At first, the congregation’s response was positive, until Jesus began to challenge their faith. Then came the *ad hominem* remarks, rejecting him just because they knew his humble roots. Since he was the son of a carpenter and a simple country girl, the crowd thought that he wasn’t qualified to teach them anything. And when he began to praise the faith of the Widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian, they became infuriated because he was essentially saying that these foreigners also had something to teach them. So, in their anger, they tried to kill their hometown son.

Ad Hominem argumentation entails attacking another person, not because of what they are saying, but rather because of who they are. It is a classic example of summarily dismissing someone. Unfortunately, in our social discourse today, this has become very common. Many people refuse to listen to certain people just because of who they are or what group they belong to.

A predominant theme in Luke’s Gospel is compassion for all, especially the forgotten ones. Jesus announces the good news to those who are poor, blind, in captivity, and oppressed. Basically, Luke is constantly repeating this theme. In his world view, as far as Jesus is concerned, there are no outsiders.

The second reading this Sunday from Corinthians carries with a similar message – a reminder we should all heed:

*“As a body is one though it has many parts,
and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body,
You are Christ’s body, and individually parts of it.”*

Conservatives and Liberals, Vatican II Catholics and Latin Mass Catholics, Democratic Catholics and Republican Catholics, North American Catholics and Catholics born in other countries of other nationalities, etc. Each group has its strengths, and each group has its weaknesses. To say that “my strengths are more important than your strengths” or “my weaknesses are less serious

that your weaknesses” is an absolute absurdity. Remember, when you point your finger at someone, three fingers are left pointing back at you.

Let us fight the pandemic which prevents us from respecting one another—the “ad hominem” pandemic as well as the “ad mulierem” pandemic. After all, in my 42 years of priesthood, I have concluded that Original Sin is equally distributed.