

February 4, 2018

*From Fr. Jim . . .*

**Please consider this:** There is a true story about former Prime Minister Menachem Begin's visit during the Carter administration. Seated in the Oval Office of the White House, Prime Minister Begin asked President Carter about the three telephones on the president's desk. President Carter responded: one goes to Plains Georgia, so I can keep track of my brother, Billy; one is a hot line to Moscow, which gives me instant communication with the Russians and one is a direct line to God!" "How much does that cost?" asked Begin. "Ten thousand dollars a month but it is worth every cent," replied the president.



Sometime later, Carter visited Israel and sat with Begin in his office. Seeing three telephones on his desk Carter asked, "Why do you have three phones?" "Well, one is a hot line to Cairo, Egypt, one is my direct line to Parliament, and one is my direct line to God!" Carter asked, "What does your direct line to God cost?" "Ten cents," Begin responded. "It's a local call!"

Would you consider your relationship with God a long distant one or a local one? Is God more of a higher power watching over you from a distance or very near to you, one with you and within your reach and grasp? When we pray, is our praying more like making a long distance call or talking to our neighbor from across the back yard fence?

We can't ever forget that our God is transcendent-always greater than ourselves and more than we can imagine, truly a God of heaven but our God is also incarnate – one with us in our very flesh, a God also of earth. God is as near to us as our very heartbeat and is as real to us as our love for our neighbor and as the Church is the Body of Christ, living its faith into action. Let us call upon the Lord always and often, especially while he is near.

Today's Gospel suggests that God is as near to us as Jesus was when he healed Peter's mother-in-law or he is as close to us as someone who ministers to us and serves us in Jesus's name like Peter's mother-in-law when she waited on Jesus after she was healed. Today's gospel reports that Jesus needed to find a deserted place to pray. God is as close to us in any of our deserted, private places that we call sanctuaries. These places are local calls for us where God is ever so present and ever so real. In work, ministry, discipleship, play and prayer God is close to us. Let us make these calls often and frequently and may God bless us with an awareness of his presence in all that we say and do and in every encounter with others.

**Lent begins Ash Wednesday, February 14. Our service is at 7pm.** Please remember to bring your old palm to church next weekend and we will burn this palm and use the ashes for Ash Wednesday. Thank you.