

Good Touch

Back in the late 80's, communism was collapsing all over Europe. News crews were going over to do reports on the former communist countries – lack of food, the decay of factories, those kinds of things. One thing that caught peoples' attention was the state of orphanages in Russia, Romania, and Poland.

WCCO anchor Don Shelby visited one of these orphanages in 1990, and did an on-location special they titled *The Iron Crib*. What they discovered was devastating. Conditions were awful and staff was minimal. Food was hung around toddlers' necks so that each could eat their allotted portion in the shortest amount of time. Particularly heartbreaking was that in orphanage after orphanage, even where babies had adequate nutrition and warmth, many were sick and lethargic. Some were dying with no apparent cause.

The actual reason was that these priceless babies were never held, never touched, never played with. Food and drink and clothing are inadequate to sustain human life. For human life to thrive, we need touch.

I know bad touch has gotten a lot of press lately, and rightfully so. Those evils need to be exposed to light. I am in no way downplaying the devastation caused by bad touch. But since touch is also essential to human life, I would like to give good touch equal time.

For example, we are designed to hug. We hug at holidays, airports, sporting events, churches, weddings, funerals, dinners, and wherever we run into one another.

Touch is part of celebration. When the Clayton girls won the state volleyball tournament, they leaped and hugged and high-

fived and fist-bumped and back-slapped. They could not celebrate fully without touch.

Touch is part of nurturing. When someone is sick or grieving, we hold their hand or we put our hand on their shoulder. We touch our child's face. New lovers touch so much they make everyone around them nauseous. But they're so ga-ga, they can't help themselves!

When Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus in Matthew 9, he does so by touching her hand. While He was on His way to raise the girl, a woman is healed of her infirmity by touching the hem of the Savior's robe. In Acts 19, people would touch a handkerchief to the apostle Paul, race to the sick, and touch them with it, and the person would be healed. In Mark 6, the disciples anointed the sick with oil, and they were healed. And most importantly, we touch Jesus Christ through His immaculate Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

All of this goes to show that touch is essential to our physical and spiritual well-being. We may not be able to touch God directly in a physical way, but we can touch God directly through the sacred: the disciples through their healing oil; the apostle Paul with his handkerchiefs; a warm hand on the shoulder of a grieving friend; a caress of a sick child's face; a high-five; a timely hug; and most clearly of all, the Body and Blood of Communion.

Bad touch has gotten a lot of press lately, and rightfully so. But touch is also essential to our physical and spiritual well-being. When you touch, be considerate, but don't be afraid. Make sure good touch gets equal time.