

December 7, 2021 **Community of St. John the Baptist**
St. Ambrose **Bp. Glasspool's institution as Bp Visitor**
Ephesians 4:7, 11-15; Luke 12:35-46
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How wonderful it is to be with you again as we celebrate the institution of Bishop Mary Glasspool as Bishop Visitor to this community. I am honored to be here. Thank you for having me.

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul is writing to a divided and conflicted community as he does. And he uses the metaphor of the body to drive home the notion of community as the body of Christ. Community needs every part of its body working together toward the same purpose of being the body of Christ. This requires relationships based on love and truth. So, he says, "speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."

Truth can be painful to bear, and speaking the truth can be a vulnerable act. Yet, no matter how one tries to twist it with false narratives and alternative facts, truth can never be made up. The more one tries to deny or avoid the truth, the deeper it festers in one's soul. Perhaps that is the spiritual ill we are suffering from in our common life today.

So how do we speak the truth in love, especially in such a chaotic time and circumstance such as the one we are in? We are living in a vulnerable time with so much uncertainty—the uncertainty of the COVID mutations, the uncertainty of the economic and political conditions, the uncertainty of the future of democracy, the uncertainty of the unending gun violence, the uncertainty of the global climate change and the future of this planet and on and on. What a vulnerable time we are living in!

To be human is to be vulnerable. The Latin word, *vulnus*, means wound. To be vulnerable is to be wounded or to have the ability to be wounded. No one gets through life without ever being wounded. Yet, it is the wounds of life that make us wise and perhaps even holy, because it takes a courage of faith to be vulnerable.

The capacity to be vulnerable is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength and courage. We tend to trust better those people who can be vulnerable with us, because being vulnerable connects us with a stronger bond of humanity. Vulnerability increases the level of trust in one another and strengthens the relationship of empathy and compassion.

It is also the case in our relationship with Jesus. We trust Jesus because he made himself vulnerable in his Passion and death on the cross for no other reason than his love for the world. So, it is when we can be vulnerable with Jesus and hand ourselves over to him that our faith becomes real.

Speaking the truth in love, therefore, requires being vulnerable. Living in an intentional community, as you all know, requires mutual vulnerability in order to build trust and to build a healthy and flourishing body of Christ.

A wise bishop once talked about the bishop's vocation as a ministry of guest. The bishop is always a guest to the parish or the community she or he visits. With Bishop Glaspool as visitor-guest, my prayer for you is that you flourish in mutual hospitality and mutual vulnerability and grow up together into the Christ crucified and risen!

Today is also the Feast of St. Ambrose. He wrote a treatise, called *On Repentance*, and in it is this prayer that he wrote:
Lord Jesus, give me the grace of compassion. Grant me the ability to have compassion on sinners from the depth of my heart, for that is of supreme importance. Give me compassion every time I witness the fall of a sinner. Let me never arrogantly admonish such a person but let me suffer with him and weep with him. And when I weep for my neighbor, make me weep for myself as well."