

Do we get it?

by Mary Sharon Moore

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As a work of art, there's nothing especially remarkable about the crucifix hanging on the back wall of the sanctuary of the Church of St. Mary in my town. It's neither stylized nor dramatic, nor designed to evoke the art critic's interpretation. It's "just a crucifix," an unadorned statement of Christian faith.

But every time I see this crucifix my eyes are magnetically drawn to one small, quiet detail. Two fingers of the right hand of the crucified Lord are extended as though in final blessing. Yet this subtle gesture connotes more than a final blessing. I have seen images of the Lord with these two fingers extended, iconic images of Jesus the Infant, and Christ the Teacher. These two extended fingers impart blessing, yes, but they reveal a deeper truth, a hidden identity. These iconically extended fingers quietly reveal the divine human nature of the misunderstood and tragically rejected redeemer of humankind. Jesus' final statement from the cross wordlessly affirms the truth that fueled his passion and his mission—a truth that seems too much to bear: The divine dwells in the human; the human in the divine. There is no separation. This is Jesus' ultimate vocational statement—one which eventually must be and will be made, uniquely, by each of us. In the end, Jesus quietly affirms from the cross, there is only divine communion. Those two fingers iconically extended in Jesus' crucifixion tell me: He got it. He not only understood his true identity but willingly embraced the consequences.

St. Luke's Gospel tells us that Jesus grew into his understanding of his divine human

personhood. He grew, as children do, from infancy through the stages of youth, and into his young adult years. St. Luke's Gospel notes that as a twelve-year-old boy Jesus was obedient to his parents, and "advanced in wisdom and age and favor" before God and those who knew him (see Luke 2:51-52). Through serious prayer Jesus grew in his understanding of his vocational mission—just as you and I must do. (The Gospel of St. John presents Jesus in a different way, offering an entirely different understanding of Jesus, the Word made flesh, "full of grace and truth.")

What does Jesus' "getting it"—understanding the divine human communion in his own lived experience—mean for me? "As he is, so are we in this world," we read in the first letter of John (see 1 John 4:17). Jesus expressed the truth of divine indwelling in his human experience, to the point of "obediently accepting even death, death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). At some point in my life, and certainly, I hope, by the end point, I too will get it. Just as I intentionally set my will with the Father's willing for my life, my two fingers eventually must be iconically extended to point to the mystery of my own personhood and the divine indwelling. In the lesser crucifixions of self-surrender—precisely in those moments rather than in the moments when everything is going smoothly—with God's grace I will find those two fingers extended, revealing the mystery of God dwelling within me.

After all, isn't this what we open ourselves to in "receiving communion"? We give our

consent to what we do not understand, the mystery of God's indwelling while we still live our very human and ordinary lives. These two fingers iconically extended are the sign and witness of love which each of us, eventually, must make. Do you understand what that means for your life? Do you understand the divine glory you

have been anointed to reveal? Do you get it? Your life in all of its agonies and all of its glories, eventually, will reveal to others the fulfillment of your vocation, your unique eternal calling to dwell in God. With what reverence, trembling, and radical trust in God we dare to pray to "be conformed to Christ."

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