

THE PRESENCE OF GOD
Passion for Our Church Community Part 3 of 6
JULIAN SIEBER
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Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

Community is not an optional part of God’s plan, for those “so-inclined,” but something at its heart. We need one another for many things, not the least of which is to persevere in personal prayer. And God needs and wants us together, not just for our own sakes but for the sake of the world. God’s plan of evangelism is contingent upon there being visible groupings of Christians who show forth by their life together the reality of God’s love in their midst and the true identity of Jesus our Savior, Savior of the world.

- Ralph Martin, *Hungry for God*

WHY WE NEED COMMUNITY TO EXPERIENCE HIS PRESENCE:

1. Real Community helps us to _____

Each Christian is called to community – not to a vague theologically abstract community but to a flesh-and-blood commitment to a concrete group of people, a commitment expressed in frequent contact, common service and multiple acts of love. Just as god’s plan is not for us to be only theologically in unison with him, with no experience of that union, so his plan is for us to have not just a theoretical, “on paper” union with one another but one that exists and is expressed in fact.

- Ralph Martin, *Hungry for God*

2. Real Community answers our _____

One of the main ways I had to die to myself in giving my life more fully to God was in renouncing an individualistic way of life to commit myself to other Christians. The early months of this recommitment were painful. I often would have preferred the company of people I found personally attractive to that of the people with whom I shared a bond in Christ. I often would have preferred to be alone, relating with other Christians only when I found it convenient. Ever so gradually, over the years, God has made me increasingly capable of seeing myself as but one of many parts of a body, making decisions and living my life in subordination to the overall good. The commitment to community is not in a separate part of our spiritual life but at its very center.

- Ralph Martin, *Hungry for God*

3. Real Community give us our _____

Although there are some notable exceptions, the average parish today is far from being a vital Christian community. Some relationships among parishioners, even among the most active members, are frequently cold, indifferent, superficial and minimally, if at all, committed. The superficial efforts often employed to “build community” only make the actual reality more painful. Shaking hands at the kiss of peace or at moments of fellowship, however proper in itself, falls short of the commitment to lay down one’s life for the brethren that is characteristic of true community. Those expecting Sunday Mass alone to build community overlook the fact that many of the worshippers have never made a deep personal commitment to the God they are called to worship.

- Ralph Martin, *Hungry for God*

4. Real Community calls us into _____

5. Real Community is one where its people are prepared to _____
