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Celebrating Everyday Spirituality



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A Reflection on the Human Hand

by MELANNIE SVOBODA SND on MAY 13, 2013

Today let's take a few minutes to reflect on the human hand, for it is truly amazing!

Did you know the human hand has about 27 bones? It also has about 123 ligaments—those bands of tissue that connect the bones. (I say “about” because everyone is different and people count these things differently too.) There are 34 muscles that move the fingers and thumb. In addition, the human hand has 48 named nerves and 30 named arteries. (Pause here a moment and look at your hand.



Flex your fingers and thumb a few times. Now make a fist. Can you feel the bones and muscles? Study your knuckles for a moment. Then notice the arteries on the top side of your hand and on your wrist. These supply nutrients to your hand 24-hours a day and yet we barely notice them.)

Hands are used primarily for physically manipulating the environment. The hand is capable of gross motor skills

About Sister Melannie Svoboda, SND

Sister of Notre Dame,
teacher, student, author,
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(grasping a large box) and fine motor skills (picking up a dime on the sidewalk—if people still do such things). A normal hand has five digits: the index or pointing finger, the middle finger (the longest), the ring finger, and the little finger—often called the pinky. As you probably know, our thumb is especially incredible because it is opposable—that is, it has the ability to be brought opposite the other four fingers. Chimps and monkeys also have opposable thumbs, but no other mammal has a thumb that can oppose their ring finger and pinky. (Pause and make your thumb touch the other four fingers. Isn't that something?)

The opposable thumb adds unparalleled grip, grasp, and torque to the human hand. It enables us to grab a glass of water, hold a cup of tea, sign our name, play a guitar, catch and throw a baseball, swing a golf club, hold a book to read, fashion clay pots, strike the space bar on a keyboard, wring out a wash cloth, wield a weapon, and (one of its newest designated tasks) send text messages to our friends.

The skin on the hand is also interesting. Look at your palm. Notice the many lines and ridges. These are called papillary ridges. The most famous of these are your finger prints at the tips of your fingers. As you know, finger prints are so unique to individuals that they aid law enforcement personnel to solve crimes. Basically the papillary ridges on the fingers act as friction pads to improve grasping.



Look at your finger nails. They are made of a tough protein called keratin. Finger nails protect the fingertip from injury. They also serve as tools, enabling “extended precision grip” (e.g. untying a knot or pulling out a splinter from your finger.) The fingertips themselves have the densest area of nerve endings on the entire body. Their extreme sensitivity is known by anyone who has ever caressed a bunny or banged their finger with a hammer. It is the fingers’ sensitivity that enables people to read Braille.

About Sunflower Seeds

Each Monday I'll post a short reflection, a simple musing on some aspect of spirituality— the everyday kind of spirituality that



includes things like walking in the park, slicing an onion for the casserole, caring for a child, studying for an exam, reading a line from scripture, laughing at a joke, or mourning a significant loss.

Along the way I welcome your questions, comments and insights too. After all, we're all in this life—this spiritual life—together!

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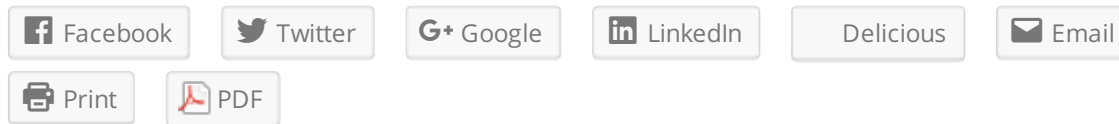
Today get to know your hands better. Observe them in action and at rest. Notice all the tasks they perform for you today. Take time to thank them—and to thank God for them. These words might help:

God, Giver of All Gifts, I thank you for my hands—which I often take for granted until I have an injury or arthritis. I thank you for all the marvelous things I can do with my hands. I know when Jesus came to earth, he used his hands well to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, to play with children, to console the grieving, to pray, to break the bread of the Eucharist, and finally to receive the nails on the cross out of love for us. Loving God, help me to use my hands well as Jesus did to serve others in your name. Amen.



(Please note: I took today's three pictures of my hands with my hands!)

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Mary Schneider May 13, 2013 at 10:51 am



Dear Sr. Melannie:

[The Wildness of God's Creative Love](#)

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A very good reflection on the hand. I had to smile when you mentioned picking up a dime. My friend in Nevada and I walked every morning (before 6 a.m.), and would pass each other about half-way through our walk. We greeted one another, passed the time of day, but always checked to see how much money the other had found. We walked on the main street of our little mountain town, and found a fairly good amount over the years. We counted the takings quarterly, I once had \$36.00 in currency and coins for 1 quarter. The money was put in the Rice Boxes for collection near the end of Lent. Since moving to Wisconsin the found money fund has dropped drastically! I still look down for those pennies, nickels, etc.

I am also very thankful that your hands so capably write with such beauty and love; the best use for our hands.....next to folding them in prayer.

Sincerely, Mary S

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND May 13, 2013 at 1:41 pm



Dear Mary, I was surprised that you found that much money on the sidewalks of your small Nevada town! Maybe the hard economic times has made people more conscious of their loose change now...Thank you for using your hands today to write to us! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

Linda May 13, 2013 at 1:04 pm



Sister Melannie,
While reading your blog entry, I immediately thought of that old song that goes:
Put your hand in the hand of the man who stilled the waters,

Put your hand in the hand of the man who calmed the sea,
Take a look at yourself and you can look at others differently,
By putting your hand in the hand of the Man from Galilee!

How wonderful it will be to actually hold the hands of Jesus!

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND May 13, 2013 at 1:36 pm



Dear Linda, Sometimes those old songs said it best! Thanks for reminding us of a great old song! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

maggie moore ssj May 13, 2013 at 9:39 pm



DEAR MELANNIE,
I THANK YOU, AND I THANK GOD FOR YOUR CREATIVE MIND...
AND GENEROUS HANDS THAT BRING US SUCH FOOD FOR THOUGHT EACH
WEEK!!!!
LOVE, MAGGIE

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND May 14, 2013 at 6:03 am



And thank you, Maggie, for using your generous hands to respond!
Melannie

REPLY

Michelle K. May 17, 2013 at 1:16 pm



I love your blog! Today's reflection is wonderful. So simple, yet so full of info. We are truly wonderfully made by God. I plan to take this and reflect upon our hands with my catechism classes. Thanks! Michelle

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND May 20, 2013 at 5:30 pm



Dear Michelle, I'm so glad you like my blog—and that you will use this reflection with your catechism classes. Thank you for writing—and for passing on our precious faith to the next generation! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

marian May 18, 2013 at 12:11 pm



Hi Sr. Melannie!

Your reflection came on the heels of a wonderful Mother's Day with my family... I read it on my Monday lunch hour...and went right to work on a note of thanks ...

Hubby hands, hammering hands

Gentle, holding, fixing hands,

I love you.

Daughter hands, sweet hands

Helping hands, hugging, lovely hands

I love you.

Son hands, playful hands,

Drumming, drawing, dreaming hands

I love you.

Mom hands, praying hands

Washing, cooking, ironing hands

I love you.

God's hands, Creator hands,

Son, Spirit, Father hands

I love you.

Be blessed, Sr. Melannie. Thank you.

REPLY

Melannie Svoboda SND May 20, 2013 at 5:29 pm



Dear Marian, Thank you for your poem/prayer. It's beautiful! I'm glad you had a wonderful Mother's Day too! Sr. Melannie

REPLY

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