

## **Christ's Long Reach**

I stretch out my hands over the bread and wine at every Mass. We priests use this gesture a lot. We impose a hand on a child at baptism. We place our hands over the elect during the scrutinies. We extend our hands over candidates for confirmation at the Easter Vigil. We raise a hand while bestowing absolution in confession. We place our hands on the head of the sick who request an anointing. God sends the Holy Spirit to those for whom we stretch out our hands.

This gesture is ancient. Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the wind cleared the way for Israel's safe passage. Jesus stretched out his hand toward his disciples to name them as members of his family.

Jesus stretched even further. The preface for Eucharistic Prayer II says, "he stretched out his hands as he endured his Passion," fulfilling the Father's will, and gaining for the Father a holy people. On the cross, the hands of Jesus are stretched out not merely in suffering. They are stretched for endurance, for fulfillment, and for gain. Jesus stretched out his crucified hands so that the Holy Spirit could part the destructive forces that impede safe passage. He stretched out his hands to embrace his mother, his brothers, and his sisters.

I stretch out my hands over bread and wine. The Spirit clears the way for us to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, that we may all reach out to others in love. Through us, Christ stretches out his hands for all time.

Fr. Paul Turner

*Paul Turner is the pastor of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Kansas City, Missouri. He is the author of numerous books, including The Stations of the Cross in Atonement for Abuse and for the Healing for All.*