

It's pride that keeps us from intimacy. People are hesitant to show their weaknesses, and yet, when we do, we make intimacy possible.

Many people hate to ask for directions, never seek advice, show up for work even when they're sick, and would never shed a tear in public. It's pride which makes us hide our weakness. And our culture expects this of us. We expect our leaders to have impeccable credentials and we criticize them when they do not. The public is a stern judge. So if we have weaknesses, if we have wounds, we hide them. It's better if they not see the light, for if they do, they will be subject to scrutiny and ridicule.

And yet, many of us know that the most intimate relationships happen when the partners don't have to wear masks of perfection; when they can be weak with each other they grow together in love. Pride will keep us from that kind of intimacy.

Pride can also keep us from intimacy with God. Two hundred years ago in the United States there was a religious belief to which many of our founding fathers ascribed. It was called Deism. Deists believed in a God, unlike atheists who did not, but they believed in a dispassionate God--a God who created the world and then let it alone, like a child who winds up a toy and simply watches as the spring dies down. To Deists, theirs was a God who did not care, who did not choose to intervene.

There's still a temptation to treat God this way, to think that He reacts the way the public does, as a stern judge, watching for our weaknesses. So if we have wounds, we hide them. If we have sins, we keep them in the dark. Sometimes even the inmost desires of our heart we do not express. Some people share those weaknesses with God but never with anyone else, and they become frustrated because they cannot overcome their weaknesses alone.

However, God has given us one another to help in His ministry of healing. God is not a creator who no longer cares. He calls us to be His own, and He heals us of our wounds. He asks only one thing--that we put away our pride and bring forth our weakness, before the Lord and before those who can help us be cured.

At this time we will celebrate the Anointing of the Sick. I'd like to remind you that the Anointing is not a sacramental like ashes or palms, that is, it is not offered to everyone. Anointing is a sacrament for those who are seriously sick or advanced in age. It is a prayer for those whose physical health is severely weakened. Those in need of the sacrament and who request it today, would you please come forward?