

SOCIAL DISTANCE

We have to maintain a safe distance, Father.

It's uncomfortable.

When we meet with family and friends,

We need to touch,

to embrace,

to kiss;

at the very least to shake hands.

We are social beings.

We supplement our verbal communication

with body language

and touch—

Or perhaps we supplement our body language and touch

with words ...

But, for now,

We must stand apart,

Keeping a safe distance.

It's not really new, Father.

There are many people in our community

We like to keep at a safe distance—

the homeless,

the hungry,

the dirty,

the alcoholic,

the drug addict ...

They make us uncomfortable,

Held at arm's length

To avoid communication—
the sorrowful eyes,
the imploring hands,
the beseeching words.

Am I guilty of this, Father:
Ignoring those in need of help,
in need of a kind word,
in need of compassion,
in need of **my** help and words and compassion,
And your love?

I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me. ... Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me. (Matthew 25: 35–40, MSG)