May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

“*Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever*”. You know what that’s like, right? Picture that in your mind. She’s in bed, flat on her back. No energy. She is separated from family, friends, and her usual activities. She’s alive but not really living, certainly not to the fullness she wants. Her world is as small and flat as her bed. She is confined to a horizontal existence.

It’s not hard to imagine. Every one of us has been there. At some time or another we’ve all had fever. But I’m not talking, however, about the kind of fever that comes with the flu or a cold with increased body temperature. I’m talking about those times in our lives when we are disconnected from the vertical axis of our lives. I’m talking about the kind of fever that disconnects us from the divine life. It leaves us horizontal and disconnected from the source and origin of life; disconnected from love, joy, forgiveness, beauty, justice, mercy, compassion, generosity, wisdom, and all the other divine attributes that give meaning to our lives, content to our relationships, and direction and purpose to what we do.

Sometimes there’s not a clear explanation for how that disconnection happened. Sometimes it’s the circumstances of life and it’s not really anyone’s fault. Other times it is our fault; choices we’ve made and things we’ve done. And sometimes I think we just forget or we get tired, lazy, too busy.

Most days I read the news and cannot help but wonder if we are standing at the edge of a flat world, disconnected from something greater than ourselves. Covid-19, war casualties, the poor, the hungry, the homeless, abused women and children, refugees are just some of the degree markers on the world’s thermometer, and the temperature is rising. The pandemic fevers of power, greed, hatred, prejudice, injustice, and violence are raging and human beings are dying. Perhaps the only fever worse than these is the fever of apathy and indifference, to be so disconnected from the vertical axis of God’s life that the life and well being of another are not our care or concern.

I suspect many of us live with those low grade fevers of self-importance, excessive busyness, the desire for control and security, the drive for success and perfection, the need for approval and recognition. They might be disguised as hard work and just reward but the disconnection is still real.

Some of you might recognize in yourselves the fevers I have described. Others might not. But I’ll bet every one of you could name times when you have been feverish, times when you felt disconnected, flattened, and confined to a horizontal existence. Regardless of how it comes about, the fever of disconnection kills; sometimes physically, sometimes emotionally, always spiritually.

The antidote for this fever is to reconnect with the vertical axis of our lives. Christ is both our vertical connection and the means by which that connection is restored and sustained. He breaks the fever. Isn’t that what happens in today’s gospel? Isn’t that what he did for Simon’s mother-in-law?

Jesus “took her by the hand and lifted her up.” She was no longer confined to a horizontal existence. She stood upright. Jesus broke her fever and restored her vertical connection. With that restoration all the other connections of her life were renewed. She was returned to her family and community, and “she began to serve them,” as evidence of life and as an offering of hospitality and gratitude.

He gives us a hand in our daily struggles to stand upright and maintain the vertical connection. Christ’s hand touches our lives, breaks the fever, restores the connection, lifts us up, and raises us to new life.

So tell me. What are your fevers? Where is your life disconnected? In what ways are you confined to a horizontal existence? Christ will break your fever of disconnection, heal your life, and make you whole.

Christ’s hand of resurrection breaks the fever of death. Christ’s hand of forgiveness breaks the fever of guilt. Christ’s hand of mercy breaks the fever of condemnation. Christ’s hand of peace breaks the fever of conflict and violence. Christ’s hand of consolation breaks the fever of sorrow and grief. Christ’s hand of hope breaks the fever of despair. In him every broken connection is restored, every flat life is lifted up, and every horizontal existence is raised to a new life on the vertical axis.

“*Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told [Jesus] about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her*” (Mark 1:30-31). “*The fever left her*,” and the fever will leave you. Amen.