



The Inclusive Community

Holy Thursday

April 1, 2010

Exodus 12:1-8,11-14

1Corinthians 11:23-26 John 13:1-15

Homily of Terry and Fred Quinn

Terry---We have listened to three stories today, all revolving around the festival of Passover and Jesus' celebration of it with the apostles---and I'd like to think with his family and friends---it was a Passover meal after all!

With this in mind, I'd like to quote Anthony's homily of last week---when he said, "It is not Palm Sunday but the Last Supper which gives Jesus the courage to face the cross. The public parade of palms is less meaningful than the dinner that Jesus says he longed to share with his friends. Jesus does not ask his friends to remember him in all his Palm Sunday triumph but he does ask them to remember him breaking bread, sharing wine, washing their feet, promising he will never leave them." An important word to connect to the Last Supper is the word, "remember."

Today we begin with a reading from Exodus reminding us of the sacrificial ritual of Passover, then a reading from the gospel of John---the gospel that was most probably written in the 9th decade of the 1st century, and is often called the poetic gospel, the only gospel that doesn't mention the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the wine, but does tell us what Jesus did at that meal. We also have the story told by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians which includes the passage we automatically think of when we think of Holy Thursday---the sharing of the bread and wine, symbols of the ever-living Body of Christ.

Three stories linked by remembrances, Passover itself-- with the ritual of remembering how the Jewish community was set free from the bonds of slavery, how they were fed in the desert and saved from death. The food at the Passover meal is full of remembrances: bitter herbs reminding of hard times, bread-sustenance for the journey,

and then sealed with a covenant, the assent of all assembled together in communion. Then we have the story of Jesus washing the feet of his friends and disciples. Jesus tells his friends to remember this action, so that they too will do the same for others, ever dealing with others in humility and compassion. "Remember," he said---"this is the way to live." When we think about who usually did the menial job of washing the feet, we realize that it was the women or the slaves—those on the lowest rung of the social ladder---- who did that job. Jesus wasn't above doing "women's work." He wasn't about patriarchy, or embroidered, golden garments or having others bow to him—he was about serving others and showing love---connecting in the most inclusive ways. Fred has a story today, a Jewish legend about how important it is to remember the lesson of the washing of the feet as we serve one another as the Body of Christ.

Fred---A Jewish Folk Tale

Bavsi was a penny-pinching scoundrel. He was so stingy that he never married, not wishing to have the added expense of a wife and children. People knew of him so well that they had a saying, "stingy as Bavsi."

One day a great famine came to the land. Crops had failed and people began to suffer from lack of food. Kind rich people distributed the contents of their granaries to the starving citizens. But Bavsi put huge wooden bars across the doors of his granaries to keep the people out. He even cut down on his servants' food and only sold his grain at a high price to those who could afford it. He grew richer while others starved and suffered. Soon the stories whispered by those who had good reason to despise him reached the ears of King Solomon himself. He decided to teach this miser a lesson he would never forget.

He sent the Royal Chamberlain to Bavsi's home with an invitation to eat dinner with the king the following evening. Bavasi was overwhelmed and greatly honored with the news. He called his servants and had them prepare his best clothes and jewels for the dinner. When he woke up in the morning he decided not to eat anything so that he would have a healthy appetite at the palace.

Bavsi's servants carried him on a platform through the streets, so that the hem of his robe would not get dusty. He was so preoccupied with the thought of eating at the palace, that he failed to notice that on every side there were men dressed in rags, lean with hunger, children who had no energy to play, women with sunken eyes red from weeping.

At the palace Bavsi was lead to a magnificent room where the Lord Chamberlain greeted him and asked him to sit down. He said, "First I want to explain to you the

behavior required in the presence of the King. On these occasions there are very strict rules which must be followed. “

“Of course,” responded Bavsi. “I understand.”

First of all, you must never ask for anything, not from the King, nor from any of his servants or anyone else Do you agree?”

“Agreed” said Bavsi with a happy chuckle.

“Secondly, whatever you see happening , you must not ask any questions or utter complaints.”

“Not in a million years,” answered Bavsi.

“And thirdly, when King Solomon asks if you are enjoying the meal you must answer with lavish praise.”

“My pleasure “said Bavsi

“You will be the only guest at the feast. You will dine alone with the king. Dinner will be ready within the hour” He was lead to a small room overlooking the courtyard.

He was beginning to feel faint from hunger, having not eaten since the previous evening. The kitchens were located on the other side of the courtyard and he could smell wonderful scents of food being cooked. Finally Bavsi was lead into the presence of King Solomon, regarded as the wisest man in the world. He was lying on cushions made of silk embroidered with threads of Silver.

“Sit, Bavsi, “said the King. “and we shall eat.” A servant carried in a bowl of soup like liquid gold and put it before the King. Another servant followed with a bowl, set it in front of Bavsi, but before he could pick up a spoon, a third servant took Bavsi’s bowl away leaving the merchant holding his spoon up in the air. He was just about to say something when he remembered what he promised the Royal Chamberlain , so he smiled at the King.

After the soup came, a fish wrapped in vine leaves followed with roasted meats and desserts and after each course the same thing happened, the food was taken away. Bavsi was bewildered , but remembering what he was told, he said, “This is the most delicious meal I have ever had.”

He thought” when this is over I can go home and have something to eat.” But the King said, “Stay and listen to some music.” When the musicians were finished Solomon said, it’s too late for you to go home. The servants will show you to your bedchamber.

Bavsi did not sleep at all. His hunger was making him uncomfortable. He asked himself “Why has the King done this to me? He must be teaching me something. What have I

learned from this? It must be the meaning of real hunger. He thought of all the starving people that he had ignored due to his lust for wealth.

So when Bavsi returned the next day he realized what a fool he had been and how much of his life had been wasted. He threw open his granary doors and distributed his corn to the poor and never again sold food to the starving people for profit. The people began to utter the saying “as kind as Bavsi “ Bavsi learned the lesson of the washing of the feet-----that the Master or the Messiah or the King or the President or the Pope or head of a company on Wall St. or the head of state walks the same path of Life that everyone else walks---and needs to do so with empathy, compassion, humility and love, knowing that we are all the body of Christ united in the same spirit that hovered over the primal waters-----the divine spirit within all of us.