

Easter 3, May 8, 2011
Acts 2, Luke 24

*Come risen Lord and deign to be our guest;
nay, let us be thy guests; the feast is thine;
thyself at thine own board make manifest
in thine own Sacrament of Bread and Wine.*

“Know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Why were they cut to the heart by Peter’s words? They must have thought the opposite, that they were doing something good by getting rid of a trouble maker, someone who was a danger to them and to their own goodness. Instead, they find that the reverse is true. Jesus was not someone that good people should despise, this was someone whom God inhabited and exalted as all that is sacred and holy. They were cut to the heart just as we might be if we had killed someone we thought to have been a terrorist and a murderer when in fact this person had been such a profound influence for good in the community that truly dangerous people who had come to know this person had turned from their vengeance and hatred and did not carry out violent acts that would have taken thousands of lives.

Peter assures them, “This promise of love and forgiveness is for *you*, for your children, and for strangers far away whom you do not even know. Open your eyes and see, receive the gift of God and the forgiveness for all the wrong you have ever done.”

Their response was to give thanks and to create the beloved community, learning and studying together, sharing meals and sharing their worldly goods with one another so that no one was without.

This terrible thing that they had done was so turned around to be good news that they found endless ways to make their thanksgiving concrete. Instead of living toward others with fear and judgment as they might have done before, and as they had done toward Jesus, they realized their oneness with each other and gave themselves wholeheartedly to the good of the community.

The couple on the way to Emmaus had not understood yet either. They believed that the terrible events they had witnessed were the whole story. They thought that if the death of a criminal had been Jesus' fate, then all their hopes that God had been *with* him, and had chosen *him* to save them from their foolishness, such hope could not possibly be true. They had not understood that God inhabited the most humiliating and unlikely lives and circumstances so as to save us from the foolishness and suffering of believing otherwise, that this is cannot be so. How we have tortured ourselves and others by imagining that God could not possibly be with us and for us, or with them and for them because we or they are too lost or broken, sad or bad. It isn't true. Where else would God be?

We imagine that the path to home and innocence is for professional saints and practiced mystics. Instead, the scriptures tell us this morning that all the fullness of God is revealed at lunch. Everything we have ever longed for can be found in a random conversation.

We celebrate this sacred meal every Sunday and sometimes I think that the reason Jesus gave it to us might be so that we will remember that any meal, no matter how

ordinary, is sacred. Every conversation, every interaction invites us to recognize the love that we are in and the love that we are.

It is perfect that this day is also Mother's Day. The Episcopal Church has included a canticle from Julian of Norwich in their new supplemental liturgical materials for morning and evening prayer. It is called **A Song of True Motherhood**.

God chose to be our mother in all things *
and so made the foundation of [her] work,
most humbly and most pure, in the Virgin's womb.
God, the perfect wisdom of all, *
arrayed [herself] in this humble place.
Christ came in our poor flesh *
to share a mother's care.
Our mothers bear us for pain and for death; *
our true mother, Jesus, bears us for joy and endless life.
Christ carried us within him in love and travail, *
until the full time of his passion.
And when all was completed and he had carried us so for joy, *
still all this could not satisfy the power of his wonderful love.
All that we owe is redeemed in truly loving God, *
for the love of Christ works in us;
Christ is the one whom we love.

A colleague told me this true story of a man he knew in Pennsylvania who sold old cars that he repaired and reconditioned. One of his suppliers whom he counted among his good friends sold him a car for this purpose that was of much poorer quality than it should have been and his friend would not make good on it. The man was quite miserable over this loss, the least of which was income, but much more so, the loss of friendship and trust in his business partner. At the end of a very bad day, he stopped into a grocery store, leaving his daughter in the car to wait for him. A woman ahead of him in the checkout line, who had downs syndrome, turned around and fixed her gaze on him. It was a look of such profound love that it shook him to the core. All of his misery and bitterness fell away. When he returned to the car, his daughter exclaimed, "Dad, what happened to you?" He would later say that he met Christ and the love of Christ in this woman's smile and it transformed him.

God our Mother bears us into the world and feeds us with the living bread of Christ's body, which is the bread we will break here in a very little while, and which is also all of you gathered together. Yes, **you** feed each other with your presence and the word of God made manifest in **your** lives. **You** are the body of Christ to the world.

We gather together here and listen to the stories just to remember **that**, to be encouraged by one another, and to tell the stories of how we recognized him in the grocery store, or at lunch, or on the soccer field, or in our child's face, or tending the garden, or laughing with friends, or weeping in the night, or in our morning meditation, or in our sacred texts. In the end, the whole of our lives is one sacred text after another.

Don't be shy to enjoy this present day sharing of the apostles' teaching and fellowship as we do each Sunday, as well as the breaking of the bread and the prayers. You all have stories to tell one another that you may strengthen each other's faith and

deepen your bonds of affection, and multiply thanksgiving and wonder among you.

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