

Reflection 4/2/15—Holy Thursday (by Cathy Dempsey)

In reading and pondering tonight's Scriptures, it occurred to me that probably the best way to begin my reflection would be to borrow some material from Fr. Tom.

About a year ago, Fr. Tom began one of his homilies with this poem by R. Tagore, an Indian poet: "I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted, and behold, service was joy." That message came at just the right time for me last year—I was tired and frustrated with what I considered to be a lot of bureaucratic nonsense in my workplace. I let myself get so caught up and angry about policies and procedures, that I lost sight of the real point of my work—serving others. That poem helped me get back in touch with the real joy of my work. It affected me so much that I wrote it in my minute book—where I write down the poems and Scripture passages and prayers that have deep meaning for me.

In tonight's Gospel passage, Jesus' actions remind us that we are to be about service to one another. Tonight we are reminded that Jesus washed his disciples' feet—an act of simple, gentle caring. Jesus spent his life, spent himself, with generosity in service. He knew that he had everything he needed from God, and so he freely shared that. Jesus freely and generously pours out himself in love throughout his ministry. He heals the sick. He speaks words of comfort and forgiveness, words of encouragement and challenge. He raises the dead to new life.

Tonight we remember how Jesus washes our feet, and how he feeds us too—not just with ordinary bread and wine—but with himself. He gives us real food and real drink to truly nourish and sustain us.

And Jesus calls each of us to do the same—to pour ourselves out in loving, joyful service to one another. When we recognize that God has given so much to us, we are compelled to share. We have each been given gifts, and when we trust God to continue to give us what we need, we have the confidence to share of what we have, and behold, when we do, we discover “there’s more where that came from.” When we get caught up in fear, and try to cling to the gifts we have, they just wither up and die.

We are reminded tonight that we are the body of Christ, not just here in this room, but throughout the world. All people, all creation, have needs to be met and gifts to share. God created us that way. We are meant to need one another and to meet one another’s needs.

Every day I need to ask myself: “Whose feet can I wash today? Who can I feed?” In my professional life it might be as complicated as trying a contested custody case or writing a fifty page document that I still call a “brief.” In everyday life it could be as simple as thanking the IT guy for fixing my computer, or listening to someone who’s having a bad day. All acts of service are equally valuable.

I also need to remember to let other people wash my feet, to feed me-- As we heard in last Sunday’s Gospel, we heard how Jesus was ministered to by the woman who poured perfumed oil on his face, and how Jesus was followed to Golgotha by a group of women who had ministered to him. In my life, I am so blessed to have friends and family who live as Jesus did by loving me and supporting me and sharing their gifts with me.

Tonight, and every day, we need to remember that Jesus has shown us the joy of serving one another.