

TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY - B - AUGUST 23, 2015

THIS SAYING IS HARD, WHO CAN ACCEPT IT?

*THIS QUESTION IN THE GOSPEL IS ACTUALLY A COMPLAINT ABOUT
JESUS' CLAIM THAT HE IS FOOD AND DRINK BUT IT COULD ALSO BE OUR
RESPONSE TO THE PASSAGE FROM EPHESIANS, OUR SECOND READING....
EVEN, WITH A MORE AMENABLE TRANSLATION IT CAN BE HARD TO
ENDURE....HARD TO ACCEPT*

DEFER TO ONE ANOTHER OUT OF REVERENCE TO CHRIST....

YIELD TO EACH OTHER AS IF TO CHRIST...

DOES THAT SHAKE OUR FAITH? IT PROBABLY SHAKES MANY OF US...

*DEFERENCE AND REVERENCE ARE NOT PROMINENT, PRESTIGIOUS
WORDS IN OUR CONTEMPORARY COLLECTION OF PRIVILEGED WORDS.....*

*YIELDING TO ANOTHER, DEFERRING TO ANOTHER, SUBMITTING OUR
WILL TO ANOTHER IS NOT AMONG OUR FAVORITE ACTIVITIES....*

UNLESS, OF COURSE, LOVE IS PRESENT.....

WHICH BRINGS TO MIND A STORY.....

A STORY ENTITLED "THE TRAVELLER AND THE STONE"

*A GOOD AND WISE WOMAN ONCE LIVED IN THE MOUNTAINS. SHE KNEW
HOW TO READ THE WINDS AND THE CLOUDS, KNEW HOW THE WEATHER
WOULD BE, AND CONVERSED WITH THE BIRDS AND THE ANIMALS.*

*ONE DAY AS SHE WAS WALKING ALONG THE MOUNTAIN TRAIL HER GAZE
WAS CAUGHT BY A LARGE ROUND STONE. SHE PICKED IT UP AND
RUBBED IT IN HER HANDS, NOTICING ITS AMAZING BEAUTY, AND*

INSTINCTIVELY KNEW THAT IT MUST BE A PRECIOUS STONE.

THE NEXT DAY SHE MET A YOUNG TRAVELLER ALONG THE PATH. HE STOPPED TO ASK HER FOR DIRECTIONS AND THEY FELL INTO CONVERSATION. HE COULDN'T HELP NOTICING THA SHE HAD A LARGE ROUND STONE IN HER BASKET, AND HE ADMIRED IT.

"PLEASE HAVE IT IF IT PLEASES YOU SO MUCH," SHE OFFERED.

AND SO THE TRAVELLER TOOK THE STONE, THANKING HER, AND WENT ON HIS WAY.

DELIGHTED WITH HIS ACQUISITION, HE ASKED A JEWELLER TO LOOK AT IT, AND WAS TOLD THAT IT WAS IN FACT A VALUABLE AMETHYST.

AT FIRST HE WAS OVERJOYED AT HIS LUCK IN BEING GIVEN THIS STONE. BUT THE MORE HE THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THE LESS COMFORTABLE HE FELT. EVENTUALLY HE MADE HIS WAY BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN AND FOUND THE WOMAN'S HUMBLE LODGE.

"I HAVE BROUGHT BACK THE STONE YOU GAVE ME," HE SAID.

PERHAPS YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT IT WAS VALUABLE. I REALLY CAN'T KEEP IT, KNOWING THIS. IT WOULDN'T BE RIGHT."

"COME IN, YOUNG FRIEND," SHE SAID, "AND LET ME MAKE YOU A CUP OF MOUNTAIN TEA."

THEN, AS THEY SAT TOGETHER WITH THEIR TEA, SHE CONTINUED, "MY FRIEND, I KNEW THE STONE WAS VALUABLE.

BUT YOU LOVED IT SO MUCH I WAS HAPPY FOR YOU TO HAVE IT."

AMAZED AT HER GENEROSITY. HER WILLINGNESS TO DEFER TO HIM

AND SENSING THAT SHE WAS A WOMAN OF EXTRAORDINARY WISDOM, HE WAS SPEECHLESS.

THE WOMAN BROKE THE SILENCE...

"BUT, IF YOU REALLY DON'T WANT TO KEEP THE STONE," SHE SAID, "IS THERE PERHAPS SOMETHING ELSE I MIGHT GIVE YOU INSTEAD, AS A MARK OF OUR FRIENDSHIP?"

HER GUEST THOUGHT FOR A WHILE BEFORE REPLYING.

"WELL, YES," HE SAID QUIETLY.

"WOULD YOU PERHAPS GIVE ME A FRAGMENT OF THE PRECIOUS GIFT THAT IS IN YOUR HEART THAT MAKES YOU SO WISE, GENEROUS AND WILLING TO DEFER TO ME?

FOR THAT WOULD BE OF FAR GREATER VALUE THAN ANY STONE."

A WISE REQUEST FOR SUCH A YOUNG MAN TOO-A PIECE OF HER HEART OUR COMPETITIVE CULTURE TYPICALLY DOES NOT VALUE DEFERRING TO ANOTHER...

IN FACT, JUST THE OPPOSITE....

E.G. IN THE POLITICAL ARENA.....I HEARD THE CAMPAIGN SPOKESMAN FOR A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE DESCRIBE THERE PHILOSOPHY AS... IF THEY HIT US, WE HIT THEM BACK EVEN HARDER....

THAT TYPIFIES MUCH THAT WE VALUE IN OUR COMPETITIVE CULTURE...

CERTAINLY, THERE IS LITTLE ROOM FOR DEFERENCE

SO, WHERE DO WE LEARN DEFERENCE AND REVERENCE?

WHEREEVER LOVE IS PRESENT.....

FORTUNATELY WE CERTAINLY HAVE A MODEL OF DEFERENCE IN OUR POPE EMERITUS - BENEDICT THE XVI, WHO STEPPED ASIDE FOR HIS SUCCESSOR.....

WE HAVE ANOTHER MODEL OF DEFERENCE IN OUR PRESENT POPE FRANCIS....

HOPEFULLY, WE HAVE MODELS OF DEFERENCE IN OUR FAMILIES, IN OUR SCHOOLS, IN COMMUNITIES LIKE THIS ONE....QAC...

WHERE LOVE AND DEFERENCE IS DEFINITELY PRESENT

WHERE LOVE IS PRESENT, THERE IS DEFERENCE, YIELDING TO ONE ANOTHER....

WHERE THERE IS THE MAKING AND DELIVERING OF MEALS FOR ANOTHER WHO IS IN A STRESSFUL SITUATION.....

LOVE IS PRESENT AND THERE IS DEFERRING TO ONE ANOTHER....

AND YOU PARENTS KNOW ALL ABOUT THIS DON'T YOU?

WHEN YOUR CHILD COMES TO YOU AT A VERY INOPPORTUNE TIME AND WANTS TO TALK.....

AND ISN'T THAT WHEN IT ALWAYS HAPPENS, YOU ARE READY TO GO TO BED OR WATCH YOUR FAVORITE TV SHOW....

OF COURSE, THAT'S WHEN YOUR CHILD WANTS TO TALK..

CAN'T WE DO THIS LATER???

DEFER TO ONE ANOTHER OUT OF REVERENCE TO CHRIST

IT IS DEFINITELY A MATTER OF THE HEART.....

WHERE THE HEART IS PRESENT, DEFERENCE IS PRESENT

AND BACK TO CHRIST'S STATEMENT THAT HE IS FOOD AND DRINK..

AND, UNDERSTANDABLY EVERYONE WAS SHOCKED.....

"DO YOU ALSO WANT TO LEAVE?"- HE ASKS HIS REMAINING FOLLOWERS

THAT'S LOVE AND FREEDOM SPEAKING...NOT PRESSURE, COERCION...

EVERYONE IS THINKING ABOUT LEAVING & SIMON PETER RESPONDS....

"MASTER, TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?".....

YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE DON'T YOU - THAT THERE WAS SOME

CONNECTION, SOME BOND BETWEEN THOSE DISCIPLES WHO DECIDED

TO STAY DESPITE SOME OF THE OUTLANDISH, PARADOXICAL AND

INCOMPENSIBLE STATEMENTS THAT CAME OUT OF THIS MAN'S

MOUTH....

HOWEVER, FRAGILE THIS BOND MIGHT HAVE BEEN AT THE TIME.....

THERE WAS THE BEGINNINGS OF A MUCH DEEPER CONNECTION -

EVEN THOUGH THE DISCIPLES MAY NOT HAVE EVEN BEEN ABLE TO

DESCRIBE IT AT THIS POINT....

SOME PROFOUND ATTRACTION DIFFICULT TO NAME....

THE BEGINNINGS OF A DEEP FAITH, TRUST AND LOVE FOR THIS MAN

PERHAPS THE SAME PROFOUND ATTRACTION THAT DRAWS US TO THIS

THIS COMMUNITY AND THIS EUCHARIST, AND THIS TABLE....

LET US GIVE THANKS FOR THAT ATTRACTION - WHICH WE CALL FAITH

AND WHICH MUST RESIDE IN OUR HEART MORE THAN IN OUR HEAD

LET US PRAY THAT - EVEN THOUGH WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO

COMPREHEND IT OR EVEN NAME IT - LET US PRAY THAT A FRAGMENT OF

***THAT PRECIOUS GIFT OF THE HEART THAT THE YOUNG MAN ASKED FOR
FROM THE WISE AND LOVING ELDERLY MOUNTAIN WOMAN WILL GROW
WITHIN OUR HEARTS, WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY.....***