

**THIRTIETH SUNDAY - C - OCTOBER 23, 2016**

**".....the one who humbles himself will be exalted" Luke 18:9-14**

**THIS MORNING I AM GOING TO DO SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT  
I AM GOING TO FOCUS ON HOW FOR ME OUR GOSPEL STORY IS RELATED  
TO A RECENT DECISION MADE BY THE COMMUNITY AT OUR MOST  
RECENT COMMUNITY MEETING, OCT. 11TH**

**A DECISION TO ADD THE TRADITIONAL FRACTION RITE BEFORE THE  
RECEPTION OF EUCHARIST - BEGINNING ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27 TH,  
THE BEGINNING OF ADVENT AND THE NEW LITURGICAL YEAR....**

**SO, IN ADDITION TO - WE SHARE THIS BREAD AND CUP.... AND WE  
PROCLAIM OUR WILLINGNESS TO BUILD A COMMUNITY OF LOVE AND  
THE HOLY PEOPLE GOD CALLS US TO BE.....**

**THE PRESIDER WILL SAY: BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD, BEHOLD HIM  
WHO TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD, BLESSED ARE THOSE  
CALLED TO THE SUPPER OF THE LAMB...**

**CONGREGATION WILL RESPOND: LORD, I AM NOT WORTHY THAT YOU  
SHOULD ENTER UNDER MY ROOF, BUT ONLY SAY THE WORD AND MY  
SOUL SHALL BE HEALED.**

**LET ME BEGIN WITH THIS STORY - IT EXPRESSES WHERE WE WANT TO  
GO - I THINK....**

**THE STORY TAKES PLACE IN AFRICA.....AN AMERICAN GROUP IS ON A  
HUNTING SAFARI AND BAG A VERY LARGE ANIMAL....**

**THEY ARE TRANSPORTING THAT ANIMAL BACK TO THEIR CAMP WHEN  
THEY PASS BY A YOUNG AFRICAN BOY - WHO IS STANDING OFF TO THE  
SIDE OF THE ROAD WATCHING THEM VERY INTENTLY AS THEY PASS BY...**

*ONE OF THE AMERICANS ASK THEIR AFRICAN GUIDE ABOUT THE BOY...  
THE GUIDE STATES THAT THE BOY IS FROM A VERY POOR TRIBE THAT  
OFTEN GOES HUNGRY AND COULD CERTAINLY BENEFIT FROM HAVING  
THE ANIMAL.....*

*THE AMERICAN STOPS AND LEAVES THE ANIMAL OFF TO THE SIDE OF  
THE ROAD FOR THE BOY TO PICK UP...*

*AS THE AMERICAN PROCEEDS HE KEEPS LOOKING BACK AND NOTICING  
THAT THE BOY REMAINS STANDING - DOES NOT APPROACH THE ANIMAL  
AFTER QUESTIONING, THE GUIDE STATES THAT IN THE BOY'S TRIBE  
THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO GO OUT AND PROCURE, TAKE THE  
ANIMAL...*

*THEY CAN ONLY RECEIVE THE ANIMAL, THEY MUST BE GIVEN THE  
ANIMAL AS A GIFT....*

*SO THEN THE AMERICAN RETURNS AND GIVES THE ANIMAL AS A GIFT TO  
THE BOY WHO RECEIVES IT GRATEFULLY ....*

*TO ME THIS STORY BEST REPRESENTS THE ATTITUDE WE NEED TO HAVE  
WHEN APPROACHING THE EUCHARISTIC TABLE -*

*WE ARE NOT TAKING BUT RECEIVING THE BREAD AND WINE AS PURE  
DIVINE GIFT...*

*I AM ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE OF OUR FRACTION RITE BECAUSE IT IS  
CONTROVERSIAL - AND I THINK A CRITICAL MOMENT IN THE LIFE OF  
THIS COMMUNITY.....SOME ARE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO THE WORDS*

*"...I AM NOT WORTHY..." - THEIR CONTINUED MEMBERSHIPN MAY BE AT  
STAKE....*

*I RESPECT AND UNDERSTAND, I THINK, THAT OPPOSITION....*

*MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT FOR SOME THE WORDS "I AM NOT*

*WORTHY" HAVE VERY STRONG SHAMING CONNOTATIONS....*

*THE WORDS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER SHAMING EXPERIENCES*

*EARLIER IN LIFE....*

*SOME OF THOSE SHAMING EXPERIENCES MAY EVEN HAVE OCCURED*

*WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND THE CHURCH....*

*SO, THE WORDS "...I AM NOT WORTHY" BRINGS BACK ALL THOSE*

*MEMORIES AND ASSOCIATIONS ESPECIALLY, WHEN SAID WITHIN A*

*RELIGIOUS CONTEXT*

*SOME HAVE WORKED THEIR WHOLE LIFE TO RECOVER FROM EARLIER*

*SHAMING EXPERIENCES....*

*I RESPECT THAT AND I APPLAUD THAT WORK AND RECOVERY...*

*WE NEED TO DO WHATEVER IS APPROPRIATE TO RESPECT AND ENHANCE*

*THAT RECOVERY PROCESS...SHAMING IS NEVER OK*

*FOR THAT REASON, THIS ISSUE IS NOT A CLEAR RIGHT AND WRONG*

*ISSUE BY ANY MEANS.....ONE SIDE RIGHT AND THE OTHER WRONG*

*WE NEED TO RESPECT ITS SUBJECTIVE NATURE - SO MUCH DEPENDS*

*ON ONE'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE - ESPECIALLY WHEN WE WERE*

*YOUNG - PERHAPS A PRE-VATICAN II CONTEXT*

*AND TO AN EXTENT, WHETHER WE ARE A MALE OR A FEMALE...*

*SO, I KNOW I AM STANDING UP HERE WITH AT LEAST TWO STRIKES*

*AGAINST ME - FOR SOME - MAYBE EVEN THREE.....*

*AS A WHITE, MALE, CELIBATE, PRIEST OF THE CHURCH....*

*I CAN ONLY ASK FOR YOUR OPENNESS....*

*HOWEVER, I NEED TO ADD HERE, ALSO, THAT IN MY PREVIOUS LIFE AS A PSYCHOLOGIST I HAD THE HONOR OF WORKING WITH SEVERAL WOMEN WHO HAD EXPERIENCED SEVERE SEXUAL ABUSE FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE....*

*AND THE RESULTING SEVERE SHAMING FEELINGS*

*AND I WOULD SAY THE WORK WAS LARGELY SUCCESSFUL -*

*SO PROFESSIONALLY, BUT ALSO PERSONALLY, I AM NOT COMPLETELY DEVOID OF KNOWING ABOUT THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF SHAMING AND I KNOW THAT WE EXPERIENCE SHAME AT THE CELLULAR LEVEL*

*DON'T WE? ESPECIALLY, IF WE HAVE THE EXPERIENCE WHEN WE ARE YOUNG - OUR BODY REMEMBERS SHAMING EXPERIENCES*

*SO THIS ISSUE GOES WAY BEYOND BEING ANYTHING THAT IS JUST RATIONAL - AND WE CAN CARRY THE SHAME IN OUR BODY FOR A LONG PERIOD OF TIME BEFORE HEALING MAY ARRIVE.....*

*SHAME TOUCHES US DEEPLY WITH A PAINFUL FEELING THAT WE ARE INTRINSICALLY NOT ANY GOOD - THAT WE ARE BAD....*

*I CAN UNDERSTAND HOW WE CAN ASSOCIATE SHAME WITH THE STATEMENT - "I AM NOTWORTHY"... OUR BODY CAN REACT INSTINCTIVELY, EMOTIONALLY -*

*IT CAN BE AN IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY REACTION TO PROTECT OURSELVES, TO CARE FOR OURSELVES - TO CLAIM OUR GOODNESS*

*I KNOW THIS ISSUE IS BY NO MEANS COMPLETELY RATIONAL-FOR SURE*

**HOWEVER, I WOULD STILL ENCOURAGE US TO BEGIN BY LOOKING AT  
THE DEFINITION OF WORTHY...**

**IF YOU DO, YOU WILL SEE... WORTHY IS:**

- 1. HAVING ADEQUATE OR GREAT MERIT, CHARACTER OR VALUE**
- 2. OF COMMENDABLE EXCELLENCE OR MERIT...**
- 3. A POSITION OF EMINENT WORTH, MERIT OR POSITION...**

**WORTHY IS OVERWHELMING DEFINED BY MERIT.....MERIT.....MERIT**

**THAT'S WHAT WORTHY IS ABOUT - MERITING, EARNING A REWARD**

**WE LIVE IN A MERITOCRACY...A SYSTEM IN WHICH ABLE PERSONS ARE  
REWARDED AND ADVANCE ON THE BASIS OF THEIR PERFORMANCE.....**

**WORTHINESS IS A MATTER OF EARNING AND PERFORMING, MERITING**

**WE DO NOT QUESTION OUR EMPHASIS ON EARNING AND PERFORMING...**

**WE LIVE AND BREATHE MERITOCRACY...**

**WE BRING OUR MERITOCRACY CULTURE INTO THIS SPACE, ESPECIALLY  
WHEN WE APPROACH THE EUCHARIST....**

**HOWEVER THE EUCHARIST IS NOT ABOUT MERITOCRACY - THE  
EUCHARIST DEFIES THE NORMS OF MERITOCRACY.....**

**THE EUCHARIST IS ABOUT GIFT - DIVINE GIFT OF LOVE**

**REMEMBER OUR YOUNG AFRICAN BOY...**

**EVEN THOUGH THE CHURCH ALSO AT TIMES TRIES TO MAKE THE  
EUCHARIST AN ISSUE OF MERITOCRACY.....**

**STATING THAT SOME ARE WORTHY, SOME ARE NOT....CERTAIN CHURCH**

**OFFICIALS SAY**

**HOWEVER, TRUST ME - - NO ONE IS WORTHY....NO ONE....**

*NOT MOTHER THERESA, NOT THE POPE, NOT THE VIRGIN MARY....*

*NO ONE IS WORTHY.....NO ONE CAN MERIT THIS GIFT, EARN THIS GIFT  
THE EUCHARIST IS PURE GIFT....A DIVINE GIFT TO A MORTAL, AT THAT....  
THAT IS WHAT WE BELIEVE....*

*TO SAY "I AM NOT WORTHY" IS TO SAY I IN NO WAY MERITED THIS GIFT,  
EARNED THIS GIFT.....*

*OF COURSE, THAT MAKES US EXTREMELY UNCOMFORTABLE....*

*TO BE IN SUCH A RELATIONSHIP*

*WE ARE EXTREMELY VULNERABLE.....WE ARE NOT IN CONTROL...*

*IT DOES NOT DEPEND ON US....WHEN IT IS A MATTER OF PURE GIFT....*

*WE ARE IN NO WAY IN CONTROL WE ARE COMPLETELY AT THE MERCY  
OF THE OTHER PARTY...*

*AND THAT CAN BE TERRIFYING....*

*ESPECIALLY, WHEN WE HAVE EXPERIENCED SHAME*

*WE CANNOT EARN THE LOVE IN ANY WAY.....*

*WE CANNOT BECOME WORTHY IN ANY WAY....*

*WE ARE FORCED TO TRUST IN THE INCREDIBLE AND ABUNDANT*

*COMPASSION AND MERCY OF OUR GRACIOUS CREATOR, SON AND SPIRIT...*

*THAT IS WHY THOSE OF US WHO IDENTIFY WITH THE PHARISEE IN OUR  
GOSPEL STORY TODAY....*

*THOSE OF US WHO KNOW THAT WE HAVE FASTED TWICE THIS WEEK AND  
HAVE PAID A TITHE ON OUR WHOLE INCOME THINK WE ARE WORTHY -  
WHEN WE COME IN HERE - AS OPPOSED TO THE REST OF HUMANITY -*

*OUT THERE WHO ARE GREEDY, DISHONEST AND ADULTEROUS -  
SO, I, AND I PRESUME MANY OTHERS NEED TO REMIND OURSELVES  
EACH TIME...  
LORD, I AM NOT WORTHY.....  
OTHERWISE WE APPROACH THE EUCHARIST MUCH AS THE PHARISEE  
WHO GOES TO THE TEMPLE IN TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY...  
FOCUSING ON ALL THE GOOD THAT WE HAVE DONE DURING THE WEEK  
I KNOW I HAVE SPENT MUCH OF MY LIFE IN THE CAMP OF THE PHARISEE  
BELIEVING THAT IF I FAST TWICE A WEEK AND PAY A TITHE ON MY  
INCOME I WILL BECOME WORTHY - AND PROCURE MY SALVATION...  
FORGETTING THAT MY SALVATION...MY REAL VALUE IS PURE GIFT  
NO DOUBT I AM EXTREMELY VALUABLE, EXTREMELY WORTHWHILE -  
BUT THAT GIFT AS A CHILD OF GOD IS PURE GIFT ALSO.....  
I CANNOT EARN IT, I CANNOT MERIT IT  
AND THAT'S OK...  
BECAUSE I CAN RECEIVE IT....I HAVE RECEIVED IT  
AS WE SAY.....GOD DOES NOT LOVE US BECAUSE WE ARE GOOD.....  
GOD LOVES US BECAUSE GOD IS GOOD.....  
AND UTTERLY MERCIFUL AND UTTERLY COMPASSIONATE  
THE PHARISEE DIDN'T KNOW THAT, THE TAX COLLECTOR DID  
I TRULY BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE OR REALLY  
HELPFUL TO THOSE WHO ASSOCIATE SHAME WITH "...I AM NOT  
WORTHY" TO OMIT THOSE WORDS....*

*WE ARE KEEPING THE QAC LANGUAGE WHICH WE ALREADY USE....  
AND INDIVIDUALS ARE FREE TO REMAIN RESPECTFULLY SILENT....  
NOT SAYING "I AM NOT WORTHY"...  
BUT PERHAPS REMINDING THEMSELVES THAT THIS RECEPTION IS NOT  
ABOUT BEING ABLE TO MERIT...TO EARN  
THIS IS ABOUT A PURE GIFT OF LOVE TO ME BECAUSE I AM VALUABLE  
AND LOVED AND GIFTED BY A GRACIOUS AND COMPASSIONATE LOVER  
AND REMEMBER THAT "...I AM NOT WORTHY..." IS FOR THE BENEFIT OF  
THOSE OF US WHO NEED THE WORDS TO TAKE US OUT OF THE CAMP OF  
THE PHARISEE AND PUT US IN THE CAMP OF THE TAX COLLECTOR WHO  
STOOD OFF AT A DISTANCE AND WOULD NOT EVEN RAISE HIS EYES TO  
HEAVEN BUT BEAT HIS BREST AND PRAYED, 'O GOD, BE MERCIFUL TO  
ME A SINNER'.  
I/WE NEED THESE WORDS TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR FALSE SELF....  
WE NEED THESE WORDS TO PROCLAIM THAT DESPITE OUR FALSE SELF  
WE ARE VALUABLE AND BEING GIFTED BY A GRACIOUS AND  
COMPASSIONATE CREATOR AND HIS SON THRU THEIR SPIRIT...  
TO OMIT THE WORDS "...I AM NOT WORTHY", FOR ME, WOULD BE  
SOMETHING LIKE EVERYONE NOT BEING ABLE TO RECEIVE THE WINE  
BECAUSE SOME CANNOT CONSUME WINE/ALCOHOL FOR WHATEVER  
REASON  
SUCH A PRACTICE, I BELIEVE, WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL TO EITHER  
PARTY....*



***WE DO HAVE DIFFERENCES WHEN IT COMES TO THESE WORDS... "I AM NOT WORTHY" - BUT, I BELIEVE, WHAT WE SHARE IS SO, SO MUCH MORE....***

***HOPEFULLY, WE WILL ALL BE ABLE TO REMAIN AT THIS TABLE AND CONTINUE TO RECEIVE TOGETHER THIS PRECIOUS AND DIVINE GIFT...***

***"AND PROCLAIM OUR WILLINGNESS TO BUILD A COMMUNITY OF LOVE..."***

***HOPEFULLY, THIS HOMILY CAN BE THE BEGINNING OF A CONVERSATION THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE WITH ONE ANOTHER ABOUT WHAT THIS GIFT MEANS TO US AND HOW IT CAN HELP US BUILD COMMUNITY AND HOW WE CAN APPROACH THIS GIFT WITH TRUST AND GRATITUDE AND HUMILITY - MUCH AS THE YOUNG AFRICAN BOY APPROACHES A GIFT AND MUCH AS THE TAX COLLECTOR APPROACHES PRAYER TRUSTING THAT***

***"THE ONE WHO HUMBLER HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED"...***