

Holy Thursday – 2017

Krista Tippit, host of the National Public Radio program, “On Being,” writes that all of our hearts are about broken in this post election season and that we had to deal at this moment with a lot of human pain and fear that is present in our public lives at every level: in our families, communities and neighborhoods, in the midst of ongoing polarization.

She goes on to say that we – action-oriented Americans – have been trained to be about opinions, positions, arguments and debates...; but this way of being is not serving our spirit well at this time; our fear and pain is often expressing itself in hate.

The New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof expressed this point in an editorial April 6, that points out the divisive polarization and mistrust that abounds:

*“When I write about people struggling with addictions or homelessness, liberals exude sympathy, while conservatives respond with snarling hostility to “losers who made bad choices.”*

*“When I write about voters who supported President Trump, it’s the reverse: now it’s liberals who respond with venom, hoping that Trump voters suffer for their bad choices.”*

Tippit challenges us that we as a nation we must deal with this and its absolutely not going to start at the level of national politics. It’s going to start where we are. She says:

*“There is much that is broken and fractured in our Nation and World and we have to live together In it. There is repair to do and there are many injured people as well, so there is protection to do. Much has to be done in practical action, and we can only do the right thing if we engage in discernment about the steps ahead and become grounded in our inner lives and stay tuned to the hearts of others. Moving toward communion is the work for now and its the only way to survive and mature as a species.”*

Teilhard de Chardin, reminds us that the work of building common life, the vision of communion, although cosmic and vast, is still through one life at a time. We have it in our grasp to figure out what we can do with our life in the place we are. This is the way change happens...

One life at the time!

Brian Doyle, in the book a “A Sense of Wonder,” tells the story of Alice Loke Cohane, who at the age of 15 was imprisoned with her family at Auschwitz. In a moving presentation to students at the University of Portland she spoke of the miracles that happened there:

“At Auschwitz there was no food or water. It was always cold, and families were separated. Alice was assigned to work in a munitions factory from 5 o’clock in the morning to five in the evening without stopping for food or rest. The factory foreman kept careful watch on the prisoners and their work. An SS officer would beat any person who worked too slowly or whose work was shoddy. Alice’s legs were shaking as the SS man walked through the factory carrying a whip. The foreman called the terrified girl out of line and ordered her to “bend down, bend down, bend down.” Alice begged not to be beaten and promised to work faster. When the SS officer wasn’t looking the foreman slipped a slice of bread under Alice’s coat.

Alice remembers: “What an incredible man! The SS man was behind him. He bet his life to give a child a chance. You know what a slice of bread meant? Could you imagine that I am starving? Instead of having me beaten, he gave me bread I could share with my sister. So you see: everywhere there are good people – everywhere.”

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Brothers and sisters, Holy Thursday is all about Communion — a simple piece of bread not only feeds a broken body but gives hope to soul! A single crust of bread becomes a sign of goodness in the midst of horror, of light in the darkest, most hopeless night.

This evening we remember the night when Jesus asked us to remember him by breaking and sharing simple bread. This bread we break tonight and in every Eucharist is to remember that Jesus’ love continues to manifest itself in the love that binds us – as families, communities, as a church. This bread is a sign of hope that goodness and justice and reconciliation are realities; despite the brokenness of our world. This bread is the glimmer of light in our own dark nights.

But this bread comes at a price... we are invited to feast on the bread of life, but to accept the invitation means to accept the role of servant, to be willing to wash the feet of one another – to carry the small and helpless among us; to share – not from our excess, but from our poverty – with those who have nothing.

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Sisters and brothers, may we joining with the Church throughout the world become what we receive here tonight: may we become more and more, the humble, giving Servant Christ – who gives his life for us and to us in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

The world depends on it..., one life at a time.

Amen!