

**26 April 2020**

**Third Sunday of Easter**

*Luke 24:13-35*

One of my favorite **folk tales is about the fox and the tiger, and the man**, who walks into the deep jungle and sees a poor fox without any legs sitting under a tree, unable to move. The man wonders how he'll survive the day, so he watches until sunset when he sees a tiger come into the clearing and approach the fox with a slab of meat which the fox eats to live another day. The man is astounded. He wonders what will happen the next day, so he returns to observe the same thing happen again. "See how the Lord provides!" he said, and then had a thought to do the same thing so that the Lord might provide for him. So, he found another clearing and just sat there with no food or water from noon onward, expecting the Lord to send a Tiger or a hyena or something to bring him food and drink. Sunset comes and goes, the man is distraught that no one brought him anything. He even voices a prayer of complaint, "God why did you leave me all alone to go hungry?" The Lord answered, "You need to learn, my foolish one, to not imitate the fox, but imitate the tiger."

I've had a **theme** in my mind since Holy Week, that **in these days when we cannot receive Eucharist, receive the host and drink from the cup, we can nonetheless BE the Eucharist**, much like BEING the tiger in that story. One of the most memorable homilies I ever heard was on TV back in the early 90's when a priest named Henri Nouwen was speaking about the Eucharist. Whether it is today's Gospel account of the Road to Emmaus, or the stories of multiplication of loaves, or of the last supper, there are usually four verbs involved. Jesus TAKES, BLESSES, BREAKS AND GIVEN. And Henri Nouwen's point (spelled out beautifully in his short book *Life of the Beloved*) is that **it's not just the bread that is taken, blessed, broken and given, but our very selves**, if we are walking the way of Jesus or call it a "Eucharistic lifestyle."

**We are all "Taken," we are chosen. Before we even have a thought of God, God has thought of us and has loved us into life. We are all blessed by God's sustaining and unconditional love. We wouldn't be here if God didn't love us; nothing would be. We are all broken, incomplete, prone to selfishness, wanting more than we can or ought to have, frustrated, prone to illness, suffering loss on a regular basis. Yet, even broken, we are called to be given and pour our lives out for the life of the world.** That's the pattern of Jesus' life, so it's the pattern of us who would follow him. It's the pattern of the Eucharist.

It's just a **beautiful way to live**, knowing you're blessed and turning to bless others. It touches us so much when we see it in Jesus, which is why we repeat the story at the altar every time we gather: He took break, blessed it and broke it and said "This is my Body, given for you." It's not just so we can admire Jesus but so it sinks into our hearts and minds. It's why we're inspired by the "**new heroes**" of our day. **Our heroes are no longer people who throw touchdowns and hit home runs. Rather, they are people who help feed us, who take care of the sick, who protect us from harm, at some risk to themselves. They are taken, blessed, broken and given.**

Given our time of pandemic right now, I want to say a little bit more about being broken. I think it's the key to BEING Eucharist. I tend to think of Jesus in the act of giving—giving his life, healing, feeding. But he's also the broken one, on the cross and in the broken ones now. He's the person fighting for their lives on ventilators, in others suffering from loneliness and fear. **And to be able to give and serve like he does, we need to know like he did, what it is to be broken. I, for example, am best at hearing the**

**sins of others when I'm well aware of my own sins.** I serve the grieving best, when I share my own sadness with the Lord. When we serve each other with a sense of common brokenness and need for love, then our service is in communion with people and not from above them.

These times give us an opportunity to get in touch with and embrace our brokenness, as the truth of our lives and as an avenue to lean on God more and be Eucharist for others. **From a new awareness of our common fragility, new and deeper community can be born.**

**I had a dream last week.** I didn't remember the dream much, but I remember that when I awoke I had the feeling of deep grief in my gut. Lying there in bed I wondered from where the sadness came. My first association was superficial but pointed to something deeper. I have been playing these word games on the computer that are quite challenging to me. You get scored. As you put together more correct answers you're rated as a "on your way," to "nice," to "solid," to "great," to "amazing," and finally, to "genius." Now, I don't hit "genius" often, but I did the day before, with a lot of help from some friends. And I think the sadness of the morning was this: that the success of the day before was nothing I could hang onto. The new day meant a new puzzle and new challenges and I probably wouldn't score as well as I did yesterday.

**And I connected that thought to these times.** There's a lot we don't control. We can't hang on to the success of yesterday as a guarantee of today. **The security of yesterday might or might not be the security of tomorrow.** We can't bottle our security and put it on the shelf for it to last forever. The political divisions in our society are suffocating. There is so much loss and grief and more to come. We are broken.

**There is a fear response to brokenness** that is not of God in which we scramble to feel secure again, fight with others to get what's mine, build walls to protect ourselves.

**There's also a love response that is from God.** It comes from situating our brokenness in the wider story of being Taken, blessed, broken and given. Accepting our brokenness, seeing Christ in it, and from our brokenness experiencing compassion and love for others who are also broken.

That's somber, but I hope you can also here the joy in it. Toward that I'd like to close with a couple verses from a song I wrote some years ago about being Eucharist.

*Refrain: You come to us and you bless us, give us strength to be broken. Now lead us to the joy of giving ourselves away.*

*Verse 1 You are the Life and Resurrection. Where you have gone, we hope to follow. May we who partake of you become what we eat.*

*Verse 4 When you saw your people hungry, you took five loaves, their humble offering. Now Take us, Break us, Give us, as your life for the world.*