

Holy Thursday 2018:

A few years ago our nation marked the fiftieth anniversary of the March from Selma to Montgomery for the right of African American citizens to vote. Among the tens of thousands of marchers that Spring day was a young Franciscan Nun named Sr. Antona. After the march she pretty much disappeared from view – happy to continue her work in healthcare in St. Louis – but on the fiftieth anniversary of the march and in the 91st year of her life Sr. Antona told her story – not only of her journey across the bridge, but of her journey to the Church and the convent.

Antona's mother died when she was four years old and her father could not raise her and her two siblings so he placed them in the McLean County Home for Colored Children in Illinois. There among the children was one Catholic boy who was not permitted to practice his Catholic faith.

When she was nine years old Antona and that boy, nicknamed Bish, were sent to collect day old bread for the children's home. While no one was looking Bish took her for a secret visit to a Catholic Church where he knelt at the communion rail and prayed. Then he explained to Antona about the tabernacle, the little house where Jesus was kept,

and that in the Catholic Church “God was hidden in the bread.” Sister Antona later said that God used Bish to teach her and that it was his belief that God was “hidden in the bread” that brought her to Catholicism and a life of service as a Catholic Sister.

Today we gather because we are the people who believe in God even where God is hidden and that belief continues to call us as it called a young Antona Ebo.

We believe and profess that God is hidden in the bread and wine that we break and share and that belief we have held for two thousand years has continued to gather us around the table of the Eucharist from the Last Supper to this Holy Thursday gathering.

We believe and profess that our God is hidden in the Servant Messiah who got up from the table, wrapped a towel around his waist and washed the feet of his disciples. And because we believe we are still able to hear him say “as I have done for you, you should also do”, and, while we may stumble in the effort, we still try to follow his example of humble service.

We believe that our God is hidden in the least of his sisters and brothers. In the immigrant and refugee, in the prisoner and addict, in the unloved, abused and abandoned

so even when it is frightening, even when it is inconvenient we rub our eyes to see God hidden there and honor him in the little house (as Bish said) where Jesus is kept.

And I believe and I profess with you that our God who is hidden in the bread – who is hidden in his servant – who is hidden in the least of his sisters and brothers – whom not even the earth and sea and sky can contain - has chosen in mercy and compassion to hide himself even in your heart and mine because he loves us.

So tonight listen to the advice contained in the words of a brave woman who once held the hand of her friend Bish to sneak into a church to learn about the hidden God. These are the words of Sr. Antona Ebo. “Pray and talk with him, and, when he is ready to use you, he will let you know, I love the Lord and that gives me reason for wanting to keep on keeping on until my time comes.”