

Devotions – February 19-25, 2017

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Sunday, February 19, 2017

Henri Nouwen, priest and spiritual guide for a generation, apparently loved the circus and was once given the chance to try out his favorite act – the trapeze. Carefully and safely suspended by ropes he hung from and swung from the trapeze. Eventually he let go of the trapeze to be caught by the fellow trapeze artist. Afterward he remarked that he better understood the miracle of the trapeze artist. It is not in the dazzling flips and airborne acrobatics. The miracle is in the reliability of the catcher. And so it is in life with God, the courage and daring necessary to live this life of radical love does not depend on us, but on the trustworthiness of the divine catcher.

Let us pray:

O God, you are the creator of the world, the liberator of your people, and the wisdom of the earth. By the resurrection of your Son free us from our fears, restore us in your image, and ignite us with your light, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(ELW p. 31)



Monday, February 20, 2017

Twenty-five years ago Henri Nouwen wrote his little classic Life of the Beloved. It was intended to speak to a secular audience, but its power is not limited to folks unfamiliar with church language or practice. He wants each reader to hear what he has heard in the words spoken to Jesus at his baptism. “You are my beloved, on you my favor rests.” This could be a wonderful way to begin and/or end each day. Not unlike the pattern Martin Luther recommends for starting the day. Remember who you are, remember that you are baptized. Remember that you are beloved and that on you God’s favor rests.

Let us pray:

We give you thanks, O God, that through water and the Holy Spirit you give us new birth, cleanse us from sin, and raise us to eternal life. Stir up in your people the gift of your Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever. Amen. (ELW p. 237)



Tuesday, February 21, 2017

Knowing we are God's beloved is one thing. Living as if it were true is another. How can we live into the promise and gift of our own belovedness? This is the work of a lifetime, the adventure of the baptized life. All our lives we are struggling, experimenting, searching for how to discover, recover, uncover the beauty and goodness of this blessed life. St. Augustine, in the 4th century described the experience this way. "Our hearts are made for you O God. And our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." So, there is a restlessness that accompanies our belovedness. It's part of the landscape of living this baptized life - our holy wrestling match with God.

Let us pray:

O God, in you we live and move and have our being. Guide and govern us in this day by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but remember that always we are walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW p. 330)



Wednesday, February 22, 2017

Each week in the liturgy of Holy Communion right at the heart of that visible Word there are four actions described. Bread and wine are *taken, blessed, broken and given* - living bread for the life of the world. This eucharistic action is not confined to bread and wine. It is what happens to each of us throughout our water-life. We are taken by God in baptism. This is not actually a volunteer activity that we sign up for. Whether baptized as an infant or later in life, our baptism is a divine calling in which the one who made us and continues to breathe life into us takes us as a beloved child. Having been taken by our best parent, our lives really never belong to us. They are gifts we've been given. What we do with these gifts and how we tend them turns out to be the story of our lives.

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: ourselves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW p. 129)



Thursday, February 23, 2017

The words of institution in Holy Communion speak into action the story of the baptized life. "Our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks..." Imagine, right now, someone you give thanks

for. Hold that person in your heart for a moment. Picture them. Imagine the sound of their voice. It could be someone you live with or someone who has died. But choose just one person that you hold in gratitude. See what this feels like and now imagine this: Our Lord Jesus has taken you and gives thanks for you. Hold that in your heart as well.

Let us pray:

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, but always to your glory and the welfare of your people, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. (ELW p. 74)



Friday, February 24, 2017

A friend and mentor said to me more than once when my days were painful or dark, “Remember, these are your credentials.” He meant that the pain we experience from loss, disappointment, our own failings, these are building our qualifications for being human, and fully so. Our capacity to be with others in their struggles is developed through the full spectrum of our experience of being alive in the world. Our compassion for others, our ability to be with others in their suffering is shaped and formed by our ability to look at our own broken images in the mirror and not turn away. The 13th century Sufi mystic Rumi put it this way, “Turn toward the bandaged place, that’s where the light enters you.” The crucified Christ can be the Savior of the world and our brother exactly because He has lived the bandaged life.

Let us pray:

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, comfort the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen. (ELW p. 86)



Saturday, February 25, 2017

In the Sunday morning celebration of Easter, in the incarnation and resurrection of God in the flesh, the last of the four eucharistic actions (*taken, blessed, broken and given*) we are given bread and wine, body and blood to eat and drink. The life of the world is taken into our very human and broken bodies for our restoration. But the fullness of this liturgy (the work of the people) is not completed in our eating and drinking. The liturgy reaches its climax in the last word which is not “Amen,” but “Go in peace. Serve the Lord.” “Thanks be to God.” In that

sending we are given to the world to be bread for the hungry in every way that our neighbors are hungry. We gather to be fed so that we can go to be food. This is the eternal rhythm of the life of the beloved. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray:

O God, we give you thanks that you have set before us this feast, the body and blood of your Son. By your Spirit strengthen us to serve all in need and to give ourselves away as bread for the hungry, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (ELW p. 136)

