

Reflection

Jubilee: July 29, 2023,

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In my top drawer I have a little pile of treasures that are precious to me. Some memorial cards, a letter or two, a little stone from the Holy Land---like that.

I see them, touch them occasionally and at times linger over a letter for the hundredth time. In that few seconds I am not standing by my dresser but I am with the person who knows and understands me like no other. Then I put it carefully back with the memorial card. Treasures in my top drawer.

You might have a little pile like that.

Why do we do that? Because no matter the words, the symbols, the picture- they bring what we love back to us. They evoke in us an affective response.

Like yourselves, no matter where we are, (and sometimes at unpredictable moments), a word, a gesture, a sound- will bring to our minds something from long ago, taking us out of the present moment and bringing a quickening of the heart, a tear, or sometimes a hearty laugh.

You know what I mean.

Jubilarians, for sure, some weeks ago were digging through photos to be displayed on our delightful picture boards. I wonder, then, if you didn't linger over them. They probably brought smiles to your faces.

Memories have a power to bring something from the past, to live again in us-even years later.

Jubilee is like that. A precious gift to each of you as you look down the years sometimes in amazement and certainly, in gratitude.

The Gospels are something like that. But even more. Much more.

Today, we are invited into the Upper Room and with the apostles watch Jesus wash their feet. A vivid moment for those early disciples. Rooted in their memory. How could it not be, as later they understood it was a prelude to the following days of grief, fear, and then amazement. Did they, for the rest of their lives, relive

this again, mulling it over, remembering every detail of this evening of deep friendship, and intimacy? Surely, it profoundly marked their lives.

Then it was recorded-only once-then proclaimed over and over-- and again, today. Because it is entrusted to us in the Liturgy of the Word, this memory moves into something more, another dimension. From memory to Memorial. Memorial- present again. We now are there in the Upper room, being loved and served. It has always been the teaching of the Church that the Word of God is alive and active and in a most particular way, the Gospel, when proclaimed, lives again in our presence today.

Memorial has a formal definition: "Objective reality from the past, actualized now." Informally --and perhaps more profoundly, we might say: "Real Presence."

This whole idea set me to wondering:

? What if this action of Jesus Washing Feet had not made it into the Scriptures?

? That it had been lost and we never knew about it?

? What if we never knew that on this night of all nights, that giving his Body and Blood, his life, he also washed feet?

? What if we never saw that portrait of him?

? What would our thoughts about Jesus be if we were not allowed into this scene?

We might wonder, then, what would be missing from our portrait of Jesus, our knowledge and understanding? How would our Spiritual lives be different?

I thought about this in relation to our celebration today, and our Jubilarians with the myriad and wonderful ways they gift us and countless others over the years.

What would we NOT KNOW if we didn't have this part of the Gospel? I came up with three things that might be missing if we never knew about this part of the Last Supper when Jesus washed feet.

The first is this: We would not have a particular way of knowing God. Images of God abound in the scriptures, in our beautiful, created world and universe. We see power, strength, and even the response of fear, awe, and worship. There are fiery images, thunderous sounds, and storms. The psalms are a school of these images. But there are others. I asked Camille Broulliard to share with me her list

of images that we hear whenever she takes a turn to offer intercessions at Mass. She gave me 45 images. 45!!!

It is always the first two words that catch me: power and strength are among them: God of the universe, Eternal Now, Sacred mystery and more. Then, tenderhearted Camille tells us of a God of Simplicity, Haven, Gift Giver, Loving Servant...and more. How did Camille come up with these many ways of knowing God? She saw something of the Upper Room. We would have missed this if we did not have this intimate scene. Jesus descending to the floor, clothed only in a towel, picking up tired, worn feet and pouring love. Here “on the ground” tenderness that we might have missed if we had not been invited into this scene.

Our Jubilarians know this God very well. The intertwining of their lives with countless people, near and far, with ministries that pour love and are from the ground of tenderness. A second thing that would be missing if we were not given this scene in the upper room would be understanding that following Jesus is within our reach. If all we had were the miracles, walking on water, the driving out of demons, feeding thousands...we would say, that is beyond me—not within my reach.

We might think of other people and examples of great, courageous deeds, and sublime words that inspire, zeal that is unflagging, leading armies for truth... and then feel ourselves as very limited, poor, and even incompetent in some ways. These other marvelous ways are not within my reach.

But we are watching something in this scene that we can do. It is not a spectacular work of a powerful, fearful God. It is a different picture. It is a God who serves, who offers and does the simplest of tasks. In that moment it was what was needed most. This is within our reach. And because we are allowed into this scene, we can say, I can do this-- I DO do this.

Our Jubilarians give witness to this. Here are women with tremendous gifts, passions, and love. They change lives, inspire us and they do it one person at a time—everywhere where they see so many needs. A splash in a basin...a task at hand...a work, a mission within our reach. The third: We would have missed True Love if we were not invited into this scene at the Last Supper.

Let's consider this:

Love—the stunning, brilliant, complex, exhausting, exhilarating, elusive and heartbreaking passion, and drive that we are born with. We choose to live out of

it. We can remember early loves and we can easily picture ourselves in a first fervor. When we consider our youth in the community, we were optimistic, full of zeal. We could not do enough for love because after all, weren't we on the verge of the great work of changing the world? This early (and perhaps romantic) love didn't consider set-backs, failures, hard choices, or simply getting things all wrong. We had strength-- and fragility was not in our thoughts.

As time and our lives went on, our love became seasoned, mature, steadfast. Love deepened into True Love. True Love is what we see in this Upper Room. Here were a group of quarrelsome, weak, and fearful people who often missed the point of what it meant to be a disciple. For Jesus, certainly this was material for heartbreak, for throwing in the towel. But no, Jesus picked it up, made of it an apron and with resilience, tenacity, steadfastness, the One whose love is the permeating force of all creation showed True Love in this humble way.

Our Jubilarians give this love. True Love. No matter the resistance of our weary broken world, they are not world weary. They may have their stories of disappointments, failures, crumbling plans and projects. Their True Love continues. We celebrate your consistency, your faithfulness, your True Love.

These three things: An image of God kneeling at our feet, service that is within our reach, and True Love are what would have been missing if we had not been invited into this Upper Room on that night.

Memory becomes Memorial. This night from the long ago past is today active in our minds, hearts and our lives through Memorial and the abiding presence of the Spirit, the very life that impels our God to live deep in us. And impels us to live the life of God.

"You have been trusted to look after something precious. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."