

Nobel Simplicity... sometimes it is a goal.

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A

IS 25:6-10A, PS 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6, PHIL 4:12-14, 19-20, MT 22:1-14



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Good Morning. Recently, I was reminded of a liturgical principle that came out of Vatican II, called ‘noble simplicity.’ Essentially, it means moving about the altar with reverence for what you are doing. Moving with an economy of steps and motions to accomplish the task at hand.

Two weeks ago, I assisted Fr. Farrell, at St Monica’s with a funeral for my wife’s aunt. Arriving early, I surveyed the steps, altar, tabernacle, ambo and seating so that I could try to move with some semblance of ‘noble simplicity.’ We began by entering the sanctuary and stopped to bless and pray over the cremains. The opening prayer followed at the altar and then Fr. Farrell said, “Please be seated for the first reading.” Father and I moved to our respective seats. Now I don’t think of myself as a small man but these had to be the largest chairs I have come across. I backed up to the chair only to find that it hit me waist high. Now I remembered, as a child, reaching out and grabbing the back of a chair and pulling myself up on all fours. That seemed to lack ‘noble simplicity’ so I managed a kind of backward hop up onto the edge of the seat. If the backward chair vault were an Olympic event I would have scored all 9’s and 10’s. When I finally managed to position myself against the back of the chair, I discovered that my feet no longer touched the floor, at all. Feeling like a child, I smiled listening to the readings as my feet were dangling beneath my Alb. Noble simplicity... it is always a goal.

Sitting there, the question occurred to me, “What would Bishop Murray have done?” For those of you that do not know our bishop emeritus, he is a good and godly man, all five feet of him. I can only imagine.

In our Gospel today we hear of the king inviting guests to the wedding banquet. I want to focus on the invitation. We receive in our life a variety of invitations. Renata and I are of the tender age that we are now receiving invitations to tour senior housing. Mind you, between the mailbox and house, those invitations hit the recycler. The invitation in this parable is to enter into a way of life.

God invites us to move through life with a ‘noble simplicity,’ a reverence for all of creation. He invites us to open our senses, to take it all in. The autumn colors that we now see are part of the banquet. The beauty of the seasons are a reminder of the Creator’s presence in all things, a sacred invitation to draw closer.

A few weeks ago, we had a gentle morning rain after a long dry spell. I opened the patio door and sat listening to the rain. I could smell the rain and earth as one nourished the other. I thought of the physics that teases water vapor into droplets. I thought of the cycle of seasons and the laws that hold our planets in orbit. I imagined the stars and wondered at the size of the universe. I thought of the Creator that brought all of this into being. My reflection ended simply with, Amen. Recognizing the Sacred Presence is part of the ‘noble simplicity.’

St. Paul describes ‘noble simplicity’ as “...the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of living in abundance and being in need.” Phil 4:12 In the midst of our abundance may we always be hungry enough to look for the Sacred.

Too often, the wedding banquet is thought of only as part of the afterlife. It is that, but it is also now, in our lifetime. God invites us to enter into relationship with him and share his love with the others in our lives. That is our joy.

In loving others, “The veil that veils all people” will be destroyed. By loving in this world, we put on the wedding garment that we heard of in today’s Gospel.

Even though my feet do not always touch the floor, I can hear in my prayer the murmur of a deeper wisdom that is the unfolding mystery of Father, Son and Spirit.

The mystic, Meister Eckhart wrote this about Trinity:

. . . the Father laughs

and gives birth to the Son.

The Son laughs with the Father

and gives birth to the Spirit.

The whole Trinity laughs

and gives birth to us.

Richard Rohr elaborates, “We are invited to participate in the eternal flow of Trinity, here, in this lifetime. The only thing keeping us from God and heaven is the ultimate and damning lie that we have ever been separate from God.”

On the day that my wife’s aunt died, in a moment of clarity that morning, she was able to receive communion. The Eucharist was a touchstone throughout her life. A life that included the atrocities of a labor camp during World War II. The Eucharistic sustains us and opens our eyes and heart to the Sacred, in this life and the next. The Eucharist that we share in this Mass, is our banquet.

References

All scripture quotations are taken from;. (1987). *The New American Bible, Revised edition*. USCCB.

Meister Eckhart, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, trans. and ed. Matthew Fox (Bear and Company: 1983), 129.