

Sermon for Sunday, November 26, 2023

I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving, with all the delicious foods you love the most! If your celebration was anything like most of the ones I've been a part of over the years, there were probably leftovers. You always want to make sure that there's enough, so you usually make much more than you actually need, just to be sure. And after the meal, you send some of the remaining food away in the arms of guests, and you still have container after container of Thanksgiving abundance jammed into the refrigerator. Remind me again why we need to keep two quarts of leftover gravy...

But there's a lovely thing in this post-prandial mass of containers. There are all the meals you can make of them. Sure, we like our turkey sandwiches, but how about turkey croquettes? Turkey a la king? A carcass becomes a turkey veggie soup. Leftover mac and cheese has a half-life equal to plutonium, so we keep on nibbling on it for quite some time. And the remains of pies actually are a superlative breakfast, though I wouldn't tell my doctor about that.

I love leftovers, though I fear they get a bad rap with that name. I prefer to think of them as an extended feast. Yes, we start eating on Thanksgiving, but that celebratory goodness keeps on happening for a while afterwards. An extension of the feast!

So much better than leftovers.

Now, I know what you're thinking.

What does the big meal we ate on Thursday have to do with this beautiful feast day of Christ the King in our Gospel today?

It's all about the leftovers.

We know the story. Jesus is giving some final instructions to his disciples. He knows he will die. He also knows he will rise in glory after it all, but he will no longer be with them in the flesh. They have to do what is necessary to continue his message of the Way of Love. And he breaks down those instructions into six very straightforward tasks: feed the hungry. Give water to the thirsty. Welcome the stranger. Clothe the naked. Care for the sick. Visit the imprisoned.

Unambiguous. Clear. And, yes, sometimes hard to do, but there it is.

He gives them this message because he knows they will be traumatized by what he will go through, even though he has said that this would happen more than once. And traumatized people forget stuff. That's human nature,

And by getting down to the most simple of lists, he's giving them something that they can remember...when they become the Leftovers. When they're the ones charged with the mission of sharing the Good News, sharing the Way of Love. And they certainly may feel like Leftovers after he is gone: he was the one who could do all the things, and now he is gone. They're not gifted in the way he was gifted. How can these simple people be the Leftovers expected to feed the needs of those to whom they will preach?

I expect that at some point or other, with Thanksgiving meals, we stop looking at leftovers as leftovers and start to realize this is simply an extension of the feast. A hot turkey sandwich is uniquely delicious and different than the whole Thanksgiving Day meal. It's a blessing, a reminder that the feast goes on.

So too the disciples: at some point I wonder if they stopped trying to be Jesus, an impossibility they surely understood, and started to see themselves not as Leftovers but as an extension of the great feast of love embodied in Jesus' life and teachings. It wouldn't be the same as Jesus, of course. The Master is still the Master. But it could be an extension of that

feast...and almost two thousand years later, it is still an extension of the feast of love.

Each time we Leftovers, each and every one of us, view ourselves as extensions of the feast.

When we feed the hungry.

When we give water to the thirsty.

When we clothe the naked.

When we care for the sick.

When we visit the imprisoned.

Are we Leftovers? Or are we extensions of the feast of Christ the King, the Lord of Love, who conquers death and invites us to share the Good News in word and deed?

May it be so, with His help.

Amen.