

October 9, 2010, Festival Eucharist

If someone offers you their body to love, cherish it

Treat it with as much passion and care and tenderness

As you would have them treat your own.

If someone shows you their scars and offers you such vulnerability

Touch them healingly for we are all wounded somewhere and somehow

Holding within ourselves many signs of struggle.

If someone offers you their body to love

They are giving you such a gift; cherish it with your life. (Rosie Miles, England, Strength to Love)

The story of Ruth and Naomi begins in a context of marginalization, suffering and dislocation. They had only an open road in front of them. Ruth offers, and Naomi accepts, a promise in an imperfect world. Their companionship and the support offered and received is a survival story. We learn from them and from the Beatitudes that there is no corner of our living where the work of God is not in process. Even when it is a surprise and we don't expect it.

The various struggles these women will encounter may be our own at some time. What they do for and with each other, how they will give advice or energy or hope is always about the other's best interest. We believe that as we give and receive, bodies, hearts, wounds, that we encounter the sacred, the presence and love of God who wants to accompany us on our open roads.

In the most ordinary and unlikely places God promises surprise, even blessing. God, we believe, is behind the scenes of all of our stories moving us toward a better place, that offers new life for us and for those who will follow after us. In the family and in the church we have the opportunity to stick with each other in a variety of circumstances. When we are faithful to each other we touch a bit of the God who is faithful to us. God is always at work, offering blessing.

Jesus calls us to inclusive community, across tribe and nation, language and people. Then or now Jesus offers a possibility that all will be caught up in blessing. But it will not be easy for in following him the road is full of pain and conflict and even persecution. We recognize that he was not discouraged by what seemed to be death or failure. He was prepared for pain and conflict when reaching out to others and seemed ready to leave the results to God.

Bev and Pat have asked us to join them on this road; through family and church and communities of choice and gift, they have offered and received each other's promise. We have received their choice of each other, their many gifts of faith and talent, their vulnerability and their strength. We know that it has not been easy especially to hold onto a hope that the church will, some day, offer all of the sacraments to all of the people without discrimination. So our presence here with them is a bit of a promise and a pledge as well. We want the blessings of God offered to them without reservation. There are plenty of folks who see them as blessed already for faith, trust and hope shine through them.

It is not easy to be gay, to be a minority, to be defined by others as different. It is not easy to be the child of gay parents or the parent of a gay child. It is not easy to put our hands in the hands of others who walk this way. But it is our call, our vocation, to be agents of God's justice and healing. We believe that in sticking with them and with each other we may find the hand of God on all of us. We accept God's promise in an imperfect world...or maybe it is a perfect world for each of our blessings and companionships are needed.

And God says: I will not leave you. I will not leave or forsake you.

You are mine and I love you.

In whatever I ask of you, I will provide for,

Even if you cannot see the gifts I have set out for you.

In your time of joy I will rejoice with you

In your times of sorrow I will share your tears.

Wherever you find yourself remember this:

Do not be afraid, for I am with you always.

Of this you can be sure.

Amen+

The Rev. Linda Privitera