Sermon, March 28, 2024
Maundy Thursday
" A Meal Shared Among Friends"
A Sermon by Rev. John Balicki
St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Wilton, Maine

" Dinner! It's Dinner Time!! Come down for dinner!! People gather from all corners of the house leaving the laptops, i-phones, tv, homework behind and come from every nook and cranny of the house to meet at the common table. Only the dog is there ahead of everyone else, having been patiently awaiting this moment for hours, she is in prime position to retrieve the scraps from the table. Dinner at your house? Maybe once upon a time when kids were home? Dinner, for many households the last bastion of intimacy in American society. The only time perhaps to talk about our day, to look each other in the eye, before rushing back to the electronic world. Because my guess is there are not many families left that read stories together after dinner, recite poetry or sing together? Say the rosary together? Even watch the same TV program with each other?? No for many dinner is it – the last bastion of intimacy.

Probably we don't think of it being that way at the last supper. Jesus yelling from the top of the stairs, "Would you guys get in here to eat!! Judas stop counting that money. James and John stop arguing about where you are going to sit. And Peter leave your sword outside the room. Though it was still the last bastion of intimacy. The last time to be together, the last time to look each other in the eye.

Fr. Greg Boyle is a Jesuit priest, the founder of Homeboy Industries, the largest gang-intervention, rehabilitation, and re-entry program in the world. an enterprise to employ and give community to gang members in LA –and I don't mean Lewiston/Auburn. Fr. Greg tells a story about a gang member. *"What'd you do on Christmas?" I asked him, an orphan, abandoned and abused by his parents, who worked on the graffiti crew, attempting to restore public spaces that had been defaced. "What'd you do for Christmas?" I said; he replied, "Oh, just right here." I said, "Alone?" And he said, "No, I invited six other guys from the graffiti crew who didn't had no place to go," he said, "and they were all …" He named them and they were enemies with each other.*
I said, "What'd you do?" He goes, "You're not gonna believe it. I cooked a turkey." [laughter]. I said, "Well, how'd you prepare the turkey?" He says, "Well, you know, ghetto style." I said, "No, I don't think I'm familiar with that recipe." He said, "Well, you rub it with a stick of butter and you squeeze two limones on it and you put salt and pepper, put it in the oven. Tasted proper," he said [laughter]. I said, "Wow. What else did you have besides turkey?" "Well, that's it, just turkey. Yeah, the seven of us, we just sat in the kitchen staring at the oven waiting for the turkey to be done. Did I mention it tasted proper?" I said, "Yeah, you did."

So what could be more sacred than seven orphans, enemies, rivals, sitting in a kitchen waiting for a turkey to be done? Jesus doesn't lose any sleep that we will forget that the Eucharist is sacred. He is anxious that we might forget that it's ordinary, that it's a meal shared among friends. And that's the incarnation, I think.

"Jesus doesn't lose any sleep that we will forget the Eucharist is sacred. He is anxious that we might forget that it's ordinary, that it's a meal shared among friends". A meal shared among friends, like the upper room in Jerusalem, like the gang kitchen in LA, like in your house and mine. So here we are tonight. Why are we here? We have left behind whatever we do on a Thursday night. Maybe we left behind the people we do it with or maybe we brought them along. But we came from our respective corners around Wilton and Farmington and . . . Why did we come? I think we came looking for intimacy. We may not always admit it or acknowledge it but I think it's there. Now if you left anyone behind at home or told your children you were coming here tonight, you probably didn't say, "I'm going out to get me some intimacy". (Now that might have caused him to put down the newspaper). You could have eaten a fine meal in your own home or out in one of our local restaurants. You could have read your Bible or meditated or played your favorite music or taken a walk and seen the sunset.

You came here. To eat this meal, this meal among friends, this last bastion of intimacy. We share a loaf baked lovingly by one of our own members. We share a common cup which may be something we don't even do at home –pretty intimate when you think about it. We will soon wash each other's hands as a sign of our commitment to loving service in memory of Jesus – look each other in the eye and do something else quite intimate – wash and dry each other's hands. Another thing we don't do at home. Maybe that's why we're here and not off by ourselves – we need one another in Christian community, sharing one bread and one cup, washing hands in service to one another, to be reminded by Jesus that as I have done so you must do. Break, eat, drink, pour, wash, serve – each day –every day.

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