



The Inclusive Community

April 18, 2010

Faith

John 21:1-19 Acts 9:36-43

Homily of Terry and Fred Quinn

Today we encounter Peter in two post-Easter stories. We come upon a scene on the Sea of Tiberias where some of the disciples, including Simon Peter are gathered. Peter says, "I'm going fishing!" and the others decide to go with him. Alas, they're out all night and by daybreak, they have caught nothing. They get to the shore and they see someone. It's Jesus, but they don't recognize him even though he says, "Have you caught anything friends?" The word "friends" should have been their first clue, but only when Jesus tells them to throw the net out again and they catch so many fish that they cannot haul them all in, does "the disciple that Jesus loved" say to Peter, "It is the Lord." Then the nearly naked impulsive Peter grabs his cloak and jumps into the water. He and the others wind up in the boat; tow it and the net and the fish to shore. When they get to shore, they find bread there, and Jesus who loved to eat with his friends, says, "Come and have breakfast." and they share the bread and the fish.

(By the way, John refers to the Beloved disciple 5 times in his gospel, although there is much speculation about the identity of this disciple.) Martin L. Smith of the Society of St. John the Evangelist says, "Perhaps the disciple is never named, never individualized, so that we can more easily accept that he bears witness to an intimacy that is meant for each one of us. The closeness that he enjoyed is a sign of the closeness that is mine and yours because we are in Christ and Christ is in us."

This leads us to some observations about this story. The first is that it was only the disciple who Jesus loved who recognized him. This made me think of a song—not from my usual 50's, 60's repertoire, but a more modern song by Melissa Manchester—*Looking through the eyes of love*. Do we find divinity in others, in ourselves, in the world around us—by looking with the eyes of love? Do we recognize God and respond to the divinity all around us by the way we treat others and creation? Do we remember that in working to save the planet—as we celebrate another Earth Day---that we are looking at it and the people who live in it—with the eyes of love? Are we Beloved Disciples?

The second observation is that Jesus surely loved to share a meal with his friends. He shared this meal with no restrictions, but with friendship and inclusivity—and there was more than enough for all! It is at a meal that we share together that we garner spiritual energy to live as the body of Christ.

The third observation is that Jesus asks Simon Peter if he loves him—asks him three times----to emphasize what he is asking him to do in faith and love. He asks him to feed the sheep----if you love me, if you love what you see in me---see it in yourself and those around you---in the world in which you live---have faith, trust in that love and “Follow me.” Care for the kingdom of God within yourself and within the world around you. “Have faith in yourself and in the love present in all of creation—seek to help it grow as the plants and trees grow each year bursting forth with natural goodness. Seek to be healers as Peter was in today’s story from Acts (after all he entered a room with weeping women and showed compassion for them and for Dorcas) --as he continued to follow the Way revealed by Jesus and recognized by the disciples through faithful love. When we do this and see the kingdom or kindom of God within ourselves and within the world around us---- are we not all beloved disciples? With this in mind, we remember Antoine de St. Exupery’s famous lines from *The Little Prince*

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye".

In the spirit of St. Exupery, Fred has a metaphorical fantasy about faith in oneself and the guidance that love inspires as we make our way through life.

Fred---

This is a retelling of a story that takes place in Paris in the early 1900’s. Hilda Louise was an orphan. When she was eight years old her parents disappeared while in the Swiss Alps. Her only other living relative was her father’s younger brother, Jules. But he could not be found. Hilda was sent to live in an orphanage in Paris, *Chez Mes Petits Choux*, (The Place of the Little Cabbages.)

Hilda was very quiet at first. She, of course, was overwhelmed by the trauma of the loss of her mother and father and prayed that her uncle Jules would be found.

Hilda lived in a large dormitory with 105 other orphans and Madame Zanzibar. She slowly grew to love Madame Zanzibar who was a gentle caring soul. The orphans admired her red hair and gradually became friends with Hilda. But she often was bored. In three months she had embroidered 250 handkerchiefs. She longed for a family of her own, and often had a conversation in her imagination with her parents and told them she wanted to find Uncle Jules.

One day while in the garden, Hilda floated up in the air, not very high but enough for her to know that something different was happening to her at last.

“Mon Dieu” exclaimed Madame Zanzibar when she saw Hilda Louise.

When the children heard of it they ran out into the garden see what was happening with Hilda. ““Magnifique” shouted the other orphans. Hilda was soon going to provide a real change in the lives of all her friends.

Each day Hilda Louise floated a little higher. Soon she was able to sit at the top of the apple tree in the garden. She could look over the brick walls of the orphanage. With her ability to float, she was able to retrieve balls stuck in the tree branches. And inside the great hall Madame Zanzibar was happy that she could help her by polishing the brass chandelier above.

In time Hilda learned to put on a show for the delighted orphans. She learned to soar like a bird in the air and do summersaults.

What Hilda loved most of all was looking over the walls of the orphanage. From the apple tree she could see old men smoking pipes and reading newspapers, women with large packages, children playing with hoops in the cobblestone streets, and romantic couples drinking coffee at sidewalk cafes.

One Saturday morning, Hilda Louise was sitting on top of the apple tree when a strong gust of wind blew her off the tree and over the orphanage walls. She traveled past the neighborhood near the orphanage and floated over a small park. Below she saw an artist painting ducks on a pond.

“Bonjour!” Hilda called to the artist, but he didn’t look up. She then floated into the heart of Paris, and passed the Eiffel Tower. She waved to the sightseers. Only a small boy saw her and waved back. Then she floated to the top of the Arch of Triumph. She stood for a brief moment before being blown away. She floated over the spires of the Cathedral of Notre Dame and made faces at the gargoyles.

At four o’clock in the afternoon, Hilda began to descend from the sky No matter how hard she tried, she could not rise. She floated past the highest rooftops. Then Hilda Louise glided thru a garret window and hovered near the ceiling. Below her painting at an easel was an artist with bright red hair.

“Bonjour,” said Hilda Louise.

The artist stood up. "Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed. He reached up and took her into his arms. "Hilda Louise, he cried, "At last I have found you."

"No, Uncle," said Hilda Louise smiling. "At last I have found you!" From that day on Hilda Louise lived happily in her uncle's studio. She never floated again. Jules taught her all he knew about art. She was destined to become a very successful painter.

Every Sunday afternoon, Hilda Louise and her Uncle Jules visited Madame Zanzibar and the orphans at *Chez Mes Petits Choux*. Madame Zanzibar served hot chocolate and cream puffs to all. Hilda thought of all of them as family.

"Hilda Louise, my dear, do you still float?"

"Not since the day when I found dear Uncle Jules" she replied.

"Did you know that little Marian Lee has begun floating?"

Hilda Louise looked up and there was little Marian Lee, polishing the brass chandelier. Though Hilda's life was touched by great sadness, her love of family, her sheer love of life and joy in sharing life brought her to the studio of Uncle Jules, and her Uncle who certainly did not expect to see Hilda that day, just accepted the fact that she was there—because he loved her---and we're sure had faith that they would somehow find each other. Moreover, neither Hilda nor Uncle Jules forgot the kindness of Madame Zanzibar, nor the children who looked forward to their visits. Thus, what began with Hilda continued to touch the lives of the others.

When you think about it, love is essential to real faith, and though it may be invisible to the eye, its effect is felt among those it touches and thus the universe itself.