

The Inclusive Community

Mother's Day

May 10, 2009

Homily of Terry and Fred Quinn

Vine and Branches

John 15:1-8

We'd like to base this homily not just on today's readings, but on the music we've chosen. We began with "Part of the Family." We think that Jesus must have certainly felt like "part of the family", as he ate with various people so many times. Perhaps he was reflecting his own home where Mary might have been the center of a very convivial group. Several brothers and sisters are mentioned in the gospels and epistles, so we can imagine many other relatives and friends in that Nazareth home. In the "I am the vine-you are the branches" statement we see Jesus' metaphor for the love within all of us, a love which can be "branched out" to all of creation.

With that song in mind I'd like to talk a little bit about my mother-in-law, my mother and Terry as mother. When I first met Terry we drove up to her family home in West Milford where they had moved after many years in Jersey City. What impressed me most of all that day was definitely the spread on the table--rich with food, much of it Italian----but also the conviviality of the table—the sense that in the sharing of the food and wine and the stories, you have just become "part of the family." In fact, I can almost hear Terry's mother saying, "sit down, sit down, there's plenty of food." Mangia! Mangia!

My own mother was a beautiful gentle soul. When you entered her home, she would also welcome you as part the family, probably talking quietly to you and enjoying what you had to say. It was her quiet way of making you "part of the

family' along with the sincere smile and hug she would give you. She was non-judgmental and inclusive.

Terry has been an inspiration to me as a "mother" in her concern always for the many children that received her attention in her classes thru the years as well as our own.

My poem to Terry for Mother's day

Another Mother's Day,

Another expression of my thoughts about you,

But, I think that this day is somewhat different

In quality and intensity.

I know that I see you more than ever as a

Person who is gifted with remarkable qualities. Creatively, the

drive to do so many worthwhile things, your thoughtful

remembering and affirming of others in so many ways, your love

Of children, your enjoyment of Ari and Noah,

More than you realize, you really care for so many people,

The children, members of your family, those who are so enchanted

By your superb meatballs, the activity we share in preaching and helping people to celebrate their marriage, our life in the Inclusive Community,

Our continuing friendship with our wonderful children,

Your opportunity to continue to teach with your rare gifts.

I am so blessed that we share our lives together. You are a prime example of the Spirit in my life. I hope this Mother's day is a special one. Love, Fred

This nurturing spirit evident in the mothers in my life---the spirit in the mothers here today--- which gives life to others in different ways---- can be also found in those among us who are not physically mothers, but are non-the-less mothering in nurturing life in others.

And now a short story of this kind of motherly love --- very like that which Jesus exhibited—it's a true contemporary story about a nun in the City of brotherly love, Philadelphia. Sister Mary Scullion

She has worked with the homeless in Philadelphia since 1978 and is both loved and respected for her work in Project Home (Housing, Opportunities, for Employment, Medical Care, Education.) Her conviction has been that “none of us are home until all of us are home.” The remarkable program has resulted in 95% of those who cycle thru the program have never again returned to life on the streets, a fact that made it a model for dozens of others of U.S cities. Mary has many fans and supporters but the praises, “Mother Theresa of Pharaohstown, or the NBC Nightly News quote, “the nun who won't take no for an answer” does not impact on her humility. She is completely focused on her work and her famous earthy humor. When loyal supporter Jon Bon Jovi described Mary as a nun “who swears and spits, “she merely replied, “I do not spit.” Perhaps a measure of the recognition of her work is the fact that she returned to the Times Magazine 2009 list of the World's 100 Most Influential People, landing in the #49th slot in the reader poll, ahead of such famous people as Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, publishing magnate Rupert Murdoch, and the Pope Himself (for the record was he was 79th).

The point of this story is to illustrate that the nurturing, mothering Spirit may be found in many places. Mary's real love for the homeless, including a special project for women who have problems with mental health and are on the street, results in their being given an experience and a feeling of being home, of being mothered and loved.

Terry----- With this thought in mind, we might also see in the portrait of Jesus presented by John, not the literal Jesus, but the experiential one—the human Jesus through whom we experience the divine in him and in us. In the metaphor of the vine and the branches we see the “mothering” or feminine side of Jesus, indeed the mothering presence of God in all of us, for is not the mother the vine from which springs new life? Jesus was after all born during the Wisdom or Sophia period and was the revealer of the presence of new life in all of us and in all of creation. His message, like the message of mothers was one of love and forgiveness and peace. From the vine and its branches comes fruit and because the spiritual vine, Jesus, lives in love, so do his followers--- the branches---- live in love. In Anthony’s seasonal comment in “The Point” he spoke of consequences. The consequence of being in Jesus is to love.

Our Offertory song will be “Mother Earth”----one of the lines is “from the primal womb, we are called to kinship with the stars----reminding us of our cosmic interconnectedness---just as the vine and the branches are connected.

Our last song today will be “Let it Be” by the Beatles. You may know that Paul McCartney’s mother was the inspiration for this song, but the song could certainly be words spoken by Jesus’ mother and any mother, whether biological or not---words of wisdom seeing the light that shines on me----perhaps words spoken by the mothering God giving birth to compassion, peace and love and co-creating with us, in the universe.

Happy Mother’s Day!