



Message for the Second Sunday in Lent

Table for Eight

Today's Scripture References are:

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Romans 4:13-15

Mark 8: 31-38

Greetings Saints, and again, welcome to our worship for this Second Sunday in Lent. We are Walking Home together this Lenten Season, and along the way we are exploring the different meanings of 'home' and the varied homes of which we are a part. Last Sunday, we explored the Walk Home to Ourselves. We heard about Jesus' time of introspection and trial in the desert, bookended between Jesus' baptism and the start of His public ministry, and how Jesus was supported and loved through it by Creator and Spirit. We heard the words again from above, "This is my Son, My Beloved, in whom I am well pleased." We learned that, like Jesus, our journey into ourselves need not be a solo one necessarily, and that Creator and other Blessed Ones are standing by to help us along...if we just ask.

This week, we take a Walk Home to Family. This walk is a complex one Saints, the trail is not always the best. There can be potholes and cracks, downed trees, dangerous ditches and steep precipices to navigate. Interesting and challenging people are encountered. But also, we can be rewarded with the most amazing and inspiring views; breathtaking moments of insight and clarity; deep joy and laughter and yes...love. The Walk Home to Family...the one we're born to and the one we create for ourselves. Family...where we long to be: wanted, accepted, loved,

understood and heard. So, let's take our first steps down the trail this week with Today's Message entitled:

Table for Eight

For myself and my Family, Saints, there is no more potent symbol of Family for us than the Family Table. No matter what house we lived in the Family Table was always in or near the kitchen. It was, and is, the hub of our Family's life: Information central, mission control, center of the family universe. It is where we share a meal; sort things out; solve a puzzle; express ourselves; tell a story; share our days; help each other; and make our way. Our Family Tables have stood the test of time. They have grown as we have grown...getting bigger and sturdier as time progressed, as we grew bigger as a Family and asked our simple Table to take on more. More people, more roles, more responsibility for holding our diverse, strong, opinionated, loud and funny universe together.

Mona and I started out our family together with a little, yellow, round bistro table for two. But that didn't last very long at all. Soon we realized that we needed something bigger, stronger as we defined family and family defined us. "In-laws and outlaws," we call it...this being, this entity that we know as our family. Once you are in...you are all-in. Like the Eagles song Hotel California, "You can check out...but you can never leave." Through broken marriages, broken hearts, bitter days and smiling days we hold each other, both in peace and in tension...bands stretching but never breaking. The concentric circle of Family growing wider and deeper with each new addition, adoption, and generation. Related by blood sometimes...but more often related by choice. Simply choosing to have another in relationship, in that place of being wanted, accepted, loved, understood and heard. Being Family.

We have always been blessed that for both our nuclear and our extended family, our home and our Table has always been magnetic. A place and space where all are welcome to come, sit, share, have a coffee or some

food, to talk and to listen. And through it all, the Table has been there; strong, silent, resilient and steady. As Paul speaks in 1st Corinthians, our Table, “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...rejoicing in the truth.”

Our Family table has borne the pounding of fists and absorbed the shedding of tears. Radiated in the warmth of a Family’s laughter and listened and soaked in the Family’s stories. The Table has weathered countless child’s spills and wayward food of all types and styles. Rings of all sizes dot it’s top, in remembrance of coffee shared and toasts proclaimed. Around this Table we nourish, and we are nourished. We welcome and we are welcomed, defining relatives and family in unique and bigger ways.

I was blessed to be welcomed into this organic, diverse, living stew that we call our Family. Like most, I suspect we are mutts, a blended breed, having familial DNA with more twists and bends than a linguini bowl. Indigenous, European and Caribbean all gorgeously blended and mixed, with each new generation conveying its own particular uniqueness. Ojibwe and Cree, Irish and German, Dominican and Cuban. What are we, people ask? The answer is easy...we are Family, we are Relatives, we are Related.

Our family’s relationships are simple and complex simultaneously. It is a prefix-free world where there are no ‘ex’s’ or ‘steps.’ No ex-spouses or stepsiblings. Roles are defined by actions rather than heredity or the law. Just the basics: mothers, fathers, babies and grandbabies and lot and lots of cousins, aunties and uncles and multiple Nanas and Papas. Related simply because we want to be in relationship, choose to be in relationship. Like many, I suspect, a family with our fair share of both triumphs and tragedies living together in a constantly changing equilibrium with joyfulness, determination and love for each other.

Again Saints, today’s Walk Home to Family is about yes, the families that we are born to and also the families that we create. And I am

mightily blessed to be a part of this created family, this Circle of Faith that we know as All Saints. Family... were we come seeking only to be wanted, accepted, loved, understood and heard. And like the Family Table we also come to this worship table of our church family, were we too...sort things out; share a meal; solve a puzzle; express ourselves; tell a story; help each other and make our way together. This All Saints' Table is the glue that holds us together, this diverse, smart, funny, devout, deeply spiritual, rowdy, irreverent, and opinionated bunch of Saints, as we by choice, walk our Jesus Way journey in relationship with one another. We walk home to our Family that calls us, misses us, respects us and rejoices when we are together. The Family Table where we sit and smile whenever we are around it. Because it is here that we are wanted, accepted, loved, understood, and heard by each other and by our God who sits lovingly beside us repeating the words that we never tire of hearing, "These are my children, my beloved ones, in whom I am well pleased."