

Maundy Thursday, April 1, 2010

Rev, Dorothy “Ricky” Brightman

Yesterday, I went into Dave’s Market and THEY were all ready for me - right at the door – spring flowers, baskets of brightly wrapped chocolate “eggs”, bunny balloons and other attractive paraphernalia – all cheerily anticipating the forthcoming Easter Weekend! It seemed that the whole world was included and invited to the happy celebration – a real group event! Later in the day, at East Side Market, I noticed an additional focus on Passover with special foods, candles, and decorations. Two important religious holidays competing for attention in a secular and commercial world.

What has struck me the most during the preparation for these religious celebrations has been their significance as “group” events – a time to gather with family and friends – but also with memories of past danger and the promise of salvation and hopes for a better future.

While each of us responds to God individually through prayer and worship, we also respond as a group – as Christians, as Jews – and often are addressed as a group – the message tonight being, as it was consistently during Jesus’ ministry, to **Love One Another**. To do that best we need to see, recognize, and be with one another. This is what our youth have done through their mission trips to the Dominican Republic. They truly love and care for, in the best sense of the word, their friends living in the barrio.

In tonight’s reading from Exodus, the Lord told the congregation of Israel to slaughter a lamb, mark their doorposts with its blood, and to eat it hurriedly as the Lord passed through the land of Egypt, striking down every firstborn, but passing over each marked household. Thus the Passover of the Lord is celebrated each year as a communal and historical event.

On Ash Wednesday, many of us received ashes on our foreheads. A personal yet another communal event as we indicate our identity as Christians, members of a special community of believers.

During the past few months, we heard and read reports of Jesus’ ministry of healing and teaching. We came to know his small band of committed disciples and also were amazed by the crowds that came to see him. Perhaps, at times, these gatherings frightened the authorities of church and state by the size of the group and the excitement that was generated. Then, just a week ago, Jesus entered Jerusalem with singing and dancing and rejoicing – ostensibly on the way to a Passover Feast - soon to gather with his disciples for a communal meal

We're here - so let's join in and see what happens.

Even though WE know what the next three days will bring – betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection – we are always surprised and moved. I think the events seem larger because they are shared between and among us. If you have been lucky enough to share in the Passover meal with a friend, you are ready for the next “happening”. Bread and Wine, as Body and Blood, to be shared with the Disciples – and with us too – in Remembrance of Jesus. All join in, and we do so too.

Then a challenge – all of the Disciples are not so eager to have Jesus wash their feet, yet it is an example for they are to subsequently to wash one another's feet “as I have done to you” - and to love one another “as I have loved you”

For the gathered disciples this is the start of a new world order, to give to others what Jesus, their Lord and Teacher, had given to them, to be a servant and to Love each other.

Not everyone who confounds the Easter message in the marketplace will understand this gift of love. But while WE may not have a chocolate bunny in our pocket or floppy ears on our baseball cap – we do have the gift of shared experience during these three days of remembrance, mourning, and celebration. WE will commemorate the institution of the Lord's supper – together. WE will engage in a communal ceremony of foot washing. During the forthcoming hours WE will share in Jesus' suffering - downstairs in the chapel or during quiet time that we make for ourselves.

We are fortunate because we have learned the lesson of shared and communal love and service – as members of the Altar Guild who soon will strip our altar, as members on the Choir who work tirelessly together to share beautiful music with us, as Volunteers at the St George's, Epiphany, and Christ Kitchen Soup Kitchens who feed the body and the soul, as a member of our own gathered community whose love for each other can spread out to our neighbors, friends and strangers in the community.

The eggs will disappear as will the real and chocolate bunnies. What will remain will be the real food that is shared with us, and the disciples tonight in the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

AMEN