

Healing Service Reflection

Grand Rapids, Minnesota

April 5, 2011

As a follower of Jesus of Nazareth I am saddened to be here....and, at the same time because I am a halting follower of Jesus of Nazareth, I am also honored to be in this sacred place with you. It is a place that is uniquely and rightly yours. And I'm also profoundly grateful to you.

I'm saddened because such suffering you have endured still moves among us. And this tells me, and it should tell all of us, that the work of Jesus of Nazareth is incomplete...that the world still needs him and his way of life. And it also challenges us to dedicate ourselves to drawing near to such suffering and learn its lessons. To draw near to this sin...this insidious soul virus and root of your suffering...and uproot it with our willingness to enter into the suffering and death and endlessly startling rising of Jesus...that power we call the Paschal Mystery. And let me say this slowly, carefully: You can help us! You who come here seeking and praying for healing can be our healers!

Let me explain: Rooted deeply in the hearts of some of the first followers of Jesus was this almost absurd belief that by being willing to enter deeply into his suffering, by knowing it intimately and personally, they would discover something unexpected, even glorious: new life. Since then we've been all too successful at avoiding him and his suffering otherwise the suffering that you have endured would not have occurred. I firmly believe that you can be like his first disciples...inviting us to join you and together enter into your own suffering – and in courageously taking its shape and measure, we come to this gentle Jesus of Nazareth, and *his* soul stirring, soul changing suffering. And like some of those first faithful disciples you will help us, both you and I, to also find something ...healing and life.

And so in addition to my sadness, you can see why I'm deeply honored to be here...to be in the presence of those who have endured victimization...whether it has been of your body, or of your heart and mind, or of your sexuality...or most disturbingly of your soul. We come to you affirming that you are our teachers, our teachers, because you can guide us to Christ and in and thru him to the end of sin and the end of such suffering as you have endured...and, in him, to an opening to life, life so deep, so rich that the only way to adequately describe it is to call it, as he did, eternal life!

You have much to show me, show all of us, about betrayal and the breaking of trust

You have much to all of us about judging and the injustice that it imposes

You have much to show all of us about lies and the assault on truth

You have much to show all of us about being perceived as a threat, as dangerous

You have much to show all of us about being weighed down under an oppressive burden

You have much to show me all of us about abandonment and the isolation of being alone

You have much to show all of us about dying in all its subtle forms

And if we are willing to let you show us all this, teach us about all this then...then...you will show us life...in a way we have never known it before. You will teach us how to live life...in a way we have never known it before.

The world we live in believes that in the midst of the great losses which are the legacy of abuse you stand among us as one in need. You need something *from* us. And in many ways that's true and to those needs we must all respectfully respond. But, I sincerely hope you see it's not the whole truth. I'd like to voice tonight words of gratitude for this other part of your truth...the gift, the profound gift you wait to give to us. And perhaps even your need is also a gift ...your need for us to attend to you; to see you; to understand and ultimately to plumb the great depths of spiritual wisdom you have to share with us.

Let me say it clearly and forthrightly. You invite us to enter into the moment of our own redemption. You show us the shape and dimensions of what all of us must enter if we're to live, to have life fully, this eternal life. You bring redemption to us by making Christ more fully, powerfully present to and for us.

You are the Paschal Mystery not as words on paper no matter how inspiring they may be. You are living the Paschal Mystery before us, before our very eyes. So often we're simply and profoundly blind. And you ask us to not avert our eyes, or turn away. You ask us simply to see...to see through the suffering... the possibility, the promise of something glorious. You are disciples of Jesus proclaiming mysteries we've yet to fully understand; to fully enter into. And because you have not been distant from that suffering and death of Jesus, not seeing it from some safe vantage point as most of us do, you can teach us!

You understand the deepest things of Jesus' life. I mean you really know what it means to be betrayed....like him you've explored every nook and cranny of this great human incongruity. You've plumbed the depths of betrayal and know what it does to the human mind and to the heart all the way to the deepest parts of the soul. As you open this vision to our eyes too long blind you unblind us to the betrayal of Jesus of Nazareth and give us the key to the releasing of redemption locked inside of every betrayal.

And you really know and understand lies, those Satan things, I mean the accusations from outside and later from within a mind confused by things that would confuse any of us. You've measured each one against the truth...endlessly. You know the weight of lies and the airy lightness of longed for truth. You call us, you urge us to take the measure of lies...how frequent and insidious they are. If we heed what you have to say about lies you will unblind us to the nature of the great lie against Jesus of Nazareth and thereby give us the key which unlocks every lie releasing and redeeming truth.

And you know about judging and injustice, those twins that bind and burden a life...a constriction which takes the breath away. You understand, you are an expert witness to all judging and oppression and you will unblind us to the true nature of such injustice in its full measure as Jesus stands before Pilate and thereby you give us the key which unlocks all judging releasing, redeeming justice.

You know, you really know, so much, so much that is wise, about each of these...and so much more that is necessary for us to learn.

The author and poet, Khalil Gibran, in his book *The Prophet* would have people address the Prophet with these words: "Speak to us of....children." You are Jesus' prophets and we approach you tonight, humbly, and in our lack of understanding of so many things and in our having failed to take up eternal life we ask you to speak to us

Speak to us of betrayal... for in doing so you show us the Jesus we need to see in order for us to recognize the Christ who awaits us... the new life of Christ we must embrace.

Speak to us of lies... for in doing so you show us the Jesus we need to see in order for us to recognize the Christ who awaits us... the new life of Christ we must embrace.

Speak to us of judging...for in doing so you show us the Jesus we need to see in order for us to recognize the Christ who awaits us... the new life of Christ we must embrace.

Speak to us of burdening... for in doing so you show us the Jesus we need to see in order for us to recognize the Christ who awaits us... the new life of Christ we must embrace.

Speak to us of abandonment...for in doing so you show us the Jesus we need to see in order for us to recognize the Christ who awaits us... the new life of Christ we must embrace.

Speak to us of dying and death... for in doing so you show us the Jesus we need to see in order for us to recognize the Christ who awaits us... the new life of Christ we must embrace.

And by speaking of these things, perhaps we'll enter into them, these places where you have been, and discover the full truth about Jesus' suffering and death and then, with you, find new life.

So, you see, you are teachers of the great mysteries of Jesus' life! You make Jesus' life real for us...so all of us, you and I can pass through His suffering and death so that the new life of the risen Christ can be real, starkly real for you, for me.

We apologize that we didn't or wouldn't see you and see Him.

And I hope that you will be tireless in your exploring the full depth of the Paschal Mystery. I hope you will continue to speak to us of what you come to know and understand. Never stop speaking to all of all these things. Never stop inviting us to enter into your lives until we're all redeemed and live the new life of Christ. Never stop proclaiming this Gospel of G-d!

I can only humble myself before you and be grateful, endlessly grateful.

Now it must begin...and continue....your teaching and our learning! And my prayer is for us...

That we'll be willing, at last, to see you

That we'll be willing, at last, to hear you

That we'll be willing, at last, to let you teach us

That we'll be willing, along with you, to enter into the life he, Jesus of Nazareth, proclaimed... "is at hand!"