

Thursday, April 1st, 2010

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Take Off Your Moccasins!

I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

John 13:14–15 (NRSV)

On our northern reserve, Holy Thursday is the least attended service during Holy Week. Some members of the ministry team suggested having a reenactment of the Last Supper as a way to attract more people to come to church on that evening. A table and chairs were set up. Bannock and grape juice were to be the components of the ‘Passover Meal’. An elder had agreed to play the role of Jesus and twelve men, women and children sat with him at the table.

Upon arrival, the elder informed me that, due to arthritic knees, he was unable to wash the Apostles’ feet, but that his wife would replace him when the time came. His wife arrived with a large basin, washcloth, towel and soap. I suggested that she just pour a little water over peoples’ feet and that would be fine. She replied, “Scripture says that Jesus washed their feet; that’s what I have to do!”

When the moment arrived, she knelt at our feet, washed and dried each one thoroughly, carefully and respectfully. When she came to her husband, she not only washed, but kissed his feet as well. Some among the twelve were reluctant to take off their moccasins because they were embarrassed that their feet might not be clean. The elderly woman rebuked them gently saying: “If your feet were clean, they would not need to be washed; that’s why I’m here to wash them for you. Take off your moccasins!”

In that instant, the humble act of Jesus became incarnated among us and His words resonated loud and clear: “I have come among you to give you the example. You too then must wash one another’s feet.” This elderly lady in this remote reserve had got the message and she was passing it on in her own way saying, “Don’t be afraid to humble yourself before the Lord. Take off your moccasins!”

Lord Jesus, You have come, not to be served, but to serve. You call us to be servants to one another, to wash and to kiss one another’s feet; to encourage one another to take off our moccasins and to bare ourselves so that we can be washed, so that we can be healed. We pray in the unity of the Trinity, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Sister Bernadette Gautreau, ssch
St Joseph Parish
John d’Or Prairie, Alberta

Friday, April 2nd, 2010

GOOD FRIDAY

The End of the Story

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

John 19:30 (NRSV)

Paul sat on the bed, propped up by pillows, surrounded by his sisters and extended family. He appeared as if he was looking over vast expanses as he told stories in his native language of living on the land, hunting for daily food and surviving the extremes of ‘the barrenland’. As he told the stories, he often touched the cross that hung down at his chest.

Death is a reality. Death is inevitable. Sometimes it comes quickly and unexpectedly. Sometimes it comes after months or even years of expectation. But it will come. There is also another certainty. Whenever and however death comes, we will not face it alone. With our last breath, we meet death and death is defeated. Jesus conquered death before us by giving himself fully on the cross, reconciling us to God forever. Death no longer has a grip on us. We live in the light of Jesus’ saving love and die in the promise of our life with Christ.

Paul’s frail fingers touch his cross, the cord of it braided in yarn. His grandnephew, Bobby made it for him two summers ago during one of the days of Bible School. He says in Tlichó which a family member translates into English, “it’s hard for me to talk now but I would like it if you spoke more about the Bible.” Earlier we had read the passage from Romans, *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Paul had so many stories, so many things to pass on to his people. And Paul also knew the final ending ... life in Christ.

Gracious Lord, thank you for loving us so unconditionally that you would send your beloved Son to save us. Please reveal yourself to all your people everywhere, that all may know your saving grace. In your blessed Son Jesus’ name we pray. Amen

Lois Graff
US *On Eagle’s Wings* Board Member
Huntsville, Alabama

Saturday, April 3rd, 2010

HOLY SATURDAY

Stories of our Faith

They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

Luke 24:32 (NRSV)

Stories of the North eventually led me to ‘north of 60’ over 20 years ago. Every day I looked forward to the evening meal with our bishop and church workers. We gathered around a long table, in a simple room, for a home-cooked meal...and stories. I soon learned about the culture, traditions and history of the North.

One day I met Elsie Yannik, an elder. We sat at the same table during a meal, and Elsie entertained us with stories of her life. In the early years of marriage, she and her husband travelled by dog-team to ‘the barrenland’ during winter. When her husband went out on the trap-line for up to a week at a time, Elsie stayed alone with their small children in a cabin. “What if something happened to your husband and he didn’t return”, I asked, “would you be able to find your way home?” Elsie paused, as if the thought had never occurred to her; then she replied, “Probably not”.

After 20 years, stories of the North continue to delight and nourish me.

This weekend, stories of our faith continue to delight and nourish us. Since the early days of Christianity, people have gathered to listen to faith stories of our ancestors. Like them, many of us gather late on Holy Saturday for a vigil of prayer. We listen to stories of creation, of people fleeing from slavery in Egypt, and of the great prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. Then we hear the wonder-filled experience of how two disciples, walking to Emmaus, meet a man whom they do not recognize. Together they recount the stories of their faith. Later on the two disciples *said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”* (Luke 24:32)

Creator God, we praise and thank you for our ancestors who told stories of faith for countless generations. Open our hearts to your Spirit that future generations will hear the Good News of Jesus, the Risen Lord. Amen.

Fr. Joe Daley
Our Lady of the Cape Mission / Our Lady of Sorrows Mission
Black Lake / Fond du Lac, Saskatchewan

Sunday, April 4th, 2010

EASTER SUNDAY

Mamow – Be-Mo-Tay-Tah*

“Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!”

John 20:15b–16a (NRSV)

Often we sit drinking tea in person or the phone, frequently in silence. There is much I do not know about her. Just once she spoke of her past. My friend had been removed from her family to attend a residential school. Although she knew the children there, her family members, the people who really knew her, were not there. It was a long time before she would see them again. While at school, she lost the language and culture of her people. She was given a different name, one that was easier to say by the school caregivers. During a ‘tea’ visit while offering a shy smile, she whispered a word to me. It was her aboriginal name. Only her family knew it. People like me, outsiders, did not. That whisper of her name was an invitation to a deeper relationship. I was invited to really know her. My life is different because of that invitation.

Like my friend, Mary in scripture had lost much. The loss of Jesus was not easy to accept. In the midst of tragedy, she needed to be with Jesus who loved and knew her, if only a now-dead body. She went to the tomb. Things were different than she anticipated. She assumed the man she questioned was a gardener. He simply said, “Mary.” Her spoken name was all that was necessary. Her eyes were opened. She saw Jesus—alive! Her name spoken was a life-changing invitation. “Let us walk together.”

Jesus calls my northern friend; He looks at you and me and calls each of us by name. Jesus knows us. The call is an invitation to know him. “Mamow – Be-Mo-Tay-Tah”—Let us walk together. I am here; I will never leave you—I am alive! I know you. Let us, like Mary, run to tell the many who are waiting to hear their own name. Lives can be lived differently because of that invitation.

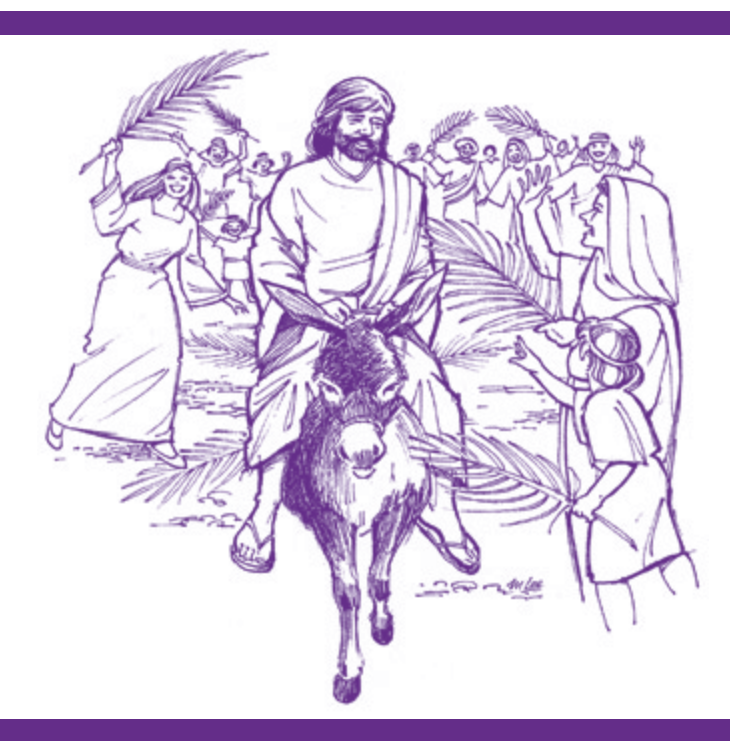
Gracious and loving Creator ... you meet us in Jesus. He loves us, knows us and walks with us. Help us to walk together with you, the world and each other. We will never walk alone—He is risen indeed. Amen.

AnnE Zimmerman
On Eagle’s Wings, Executive Director
Edmonton, Alberta

* Title from Canadian Ecumenical Anti-Racism Network, The Canadian Council of Churches, Teaching Resources, *Let us walk together.*

“Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Mark 11:9



Reflections for Holy Week 2010



On Eagle’s Wings

Power and Praise

The whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Luke 19:37–38 (NRSV)

As young and old wait in turn to make their confession and receive absolution, a small group of elders plug a keyboard into the island’s only generator and begin to play gospel songs. Hour after hour as the line outside the confessional lengthens and shrinks, praise resounds across the island. Songs of praise, songs of thanksgiving, an offering of praise for forgiveness and healing so freely given in Jesus’ name.

“I brought my drum; can I lead the people in worship the way we do it in our church?” the elder asks. As the drum sets the rhythm, he raises his voice and sings in Cree. As the leader praises God in song, the people bow their heads to recall all that God has done for them and silently add their own prayers of praise and thanksgiving. A holy stillness and peace fills the room.

Palm branches and cloaks line the road in front of Jesus as He makes His way from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. Disciples, witnesses of Jesus’ healings and deliverances, and crowds of by-standers fill the air with shouts of praise, praise for all the deeds of power that Jesus has done among them. *Hosanna! Save us! King of kings!*

Salvation, healing, forgiveness, and the assurance of our Father’s love are deeds of power so freely given through Jesus’ death on the cross and rising to life again. As we begin our journey through Holy Week, let us pause and recall the deeds of power Jesus has done in our own lives. Let us also join with the people in Jerusalem, our brothers and sisters throughout the North, and Christians of all times to acclaim Jesus as Lord and offer shouts of praise for the love He has so freely given us. *Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!*

Jesus, you are King of kings and Lord of lords; you only have the power to heal and save. We bless you and glorify you for opening to us the way of salvation. Open our eyes to see your power at work in our lives as we proclaim, ‘Blessed are you who comes in the name of the Lord’. In your name, Amen.

Rev. Lesley Hand

On Eagle’s Wings, Pastor for Northern Alberta & Saskatchewan

Editor – Holy Week Reflections

Fort McMurray, Alberta

Lavish Love

Jesus came to the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. ... Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair.

John 12:1–3 (NRSV)

Over ten years ago, I served a Presbyterian church and a Lutheran community in Alaska. When I got off the plane in Fairbanks, I remember feeling like I had come home. I am not sure what it was about the North that touched me so profoundly, but I think it had something to do with the stark beauty of the land. Pretense was stripped away.

In the text above, Jesus is the guest of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, “whom he had raised from the dead.” The anointing of Jesus’ feet with costly perfume foreshadows the rituals that will take place in caring for Jesus’ body after His death. Mary’s self-effacing action by not only lavishly pouring an abundance of costly perfume, but also then wiping Jesus’ feet with her hair models for us the best of discipleship. The stark realities of the fragility of life (Lazarus and Jesus) were in her midst and despite, or perhaps because of, this Mary gives abundantly.

In this crucible of life and death, Mary chooses to live not in fear by clinging to what she has, but out of love by giving away what she has of value. Pretense is stripped away and the only things that remain are the things that really matter.

In a world of busyness, financial pressures, endless reminders of what we need to acquire, there is something about the North, its simplicity and stark beauty that reminds us, as does this text, of the things that really matter. Amid the transience and fragility of life, our dependence upon God is necessary.

You and I stand as a people of the resurrection during this, the holiest of weeks. We return to the baptismal font and the Eucharistic table as receivers of God’s unwavering love and commitment to us. We are implored to love lavishly and give abundantly to others as Mary did to Jesus.

Gracious and loving God, embrace us this day and continue to mold us into your loving image. Touch our hearts and our hands to be a people moved to act in the world with peace and love. Continue to teach us through your Word and the witness of all those in this world of yours. We thank you for the gift of your Son and the life we have found in and through Him. Amen.

Rev. Cynthia Rasmussen, PhD

US *On Eagle’s Wings* Board Nominee

Rochester, New York

Generous Lives

Jesus said “I tell you this poor widow has put in more than all the others. Everyone else gave what they didn’t need. But she is very poor and gave everything that she had.”

Mark 12: 43–44 (CEV)

As Jesus sits in the Temple, He notices a poor widow coming close, trying to be unnoticed. Others come with great pomp and the clatter of their offerings into the box indicates the worthiness of their gifts to God—or so they thought! She comes with great humility, perhaps fearful that her gift is of no real value. Yet it is she who draws Jesus’ approbation for He understands that out of love for God she has given her all.

Forty years ago, at the time of the great famine in Ethiopia, and as modern communications were coming to the North, the Inuit were made aware, for the first time, of the needs of other peoples in the world. Their response was truly amazing! In proportion to their incomes their giving was the highest in the nation. Their own experience was one of periods of plenty and periods of starvation. Through what they now had, they reached out in love to those whom they learnt were starving.

How grateful are we for the blessings that God has given us? Do we contribute generously or grudgingly to our church and to those experiencing urgent need? The Biblical standard of a tithe is often regarded by many as too demanding a target; yet the tithe is not a maximum but the minimum. Indeed the tithe is God’s *by right*, our giving only truly begins when we have set aside what is His *already*. This is true also not just of our money, but of our time and talents as well.

As we prepare for Easter, let us prayerfully consider how we might use our finances, time and our gifts to further the work of God’s Kingdom in our church, community and throughout the world. As we consider what Jesus did for us on the cross how can we possibly hold back from giving as the widow gave? She gave all that she had!

Make us ever eager, Lord, to share the good things that you give us. Grant us such a measure of Your Spirit that we may find more joy in giving than in getting. Make us ready to give cheerfully without grudging, secretly without praise and in sincerity without looking for gratitude. For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Bishop Christopher Williams

Canadian *On Eagle’s Wings* Board Member

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Instruments of Peace

I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

Isaiah 50:6 (NRSV)

Some years ago I read the autobiography of Mohandas K. Gandhi, the great Hindu teacher of peace and non-violence. I recall being impressed at the time by Gandhi’s affinity for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and in particular, for the “Sermon on the Mount”. This text allegedly “struck [him] in the heart” and resonated deeply with other writings from his own spiritual tradition.

Gandhi understood well the lessons from the Sermon: the blessings upon the poor and the meek, upon peacemakers and those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. He knew the value of not insulting others and of restoring right relationships when these become damaged by various forms of sin. Most importantly, perhaps, Gandhi understood Jesus’ lesson that it is not enough merely to love one’s neighbours; we must go beyond this to a radical love even of our enemies. By so doing, Jesus teaches, one attains perfection, “as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

For Gandhi, living these lessons meant developing a deep spirituality that allowed him to absorb any evil that was done to him, to transform this evil within his heart, and to return blessings upon those who mistreated him. Acting as a kind of spiritual filter in the world, he was able to melt the coldest hearts not only of his own persecutors, but also of whole groups of people considered to be traditional enemies of one another.

As followers of Jesus we, even more than Gandhi, are called to act as spiritual filters in the world. Through the power of Christ, who gave up his very life on the cross to save us, we are commanded to bless those who persecute us, to turn the other cheek, to go the extra mile, and to be reconciled with any brothers and sisters who may have something against us.

Lord Jesus, help us today to be your instruments of peace in a troubled world. Melt our own hardened hearts and give us the grace to witness to your love in whatever circumstances we may face. Help us to live the love that you showed for us by dying on the cross. We pray this in your holy name. Amen.

Julien Hammond

Director for Ecumenical & Interfaith Relations

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton

Edmonton, Alberta

*Those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.*

*They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.*

ISAIAH 40:31



Mission Statement

On Eagle’s Wings is an ecumenical Christian ministry that proclaims Jesus Christ and serves the Church and individuals in remote and isolated areas of northern Canada.



“Hosanna!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

... Good News to share with all

Here is my gift of \$____ for the ministry of *On Eagle’s Wings*

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Katzman Centre

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Edmonton AB T5P 4Y3

Phone: 780.440.6594

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Lansdale, PA 19446

Phone: 215.412.8771

Toll Free: 1.866.441.6594 / Website: oneagleswings.org

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Our annual Canadian fund raising target is \$250,000 with an expected expense to raise those funds of \$40,000.