

THANKSGIVING DAY Year B, November 26, 2009- St. Paul's Cathedral, San Diego

Joel 2:21-27 Ps. 126 I Timothy 2:1-7 Matthew 6: 25-33

Thanksgiving Week is such a hodge-podge of memories, feelings, activities and people it absolutely blows my mind. It has to do with Pilgrims sharing a feast almost 400 years ago, relatives and friends sharing a feast, various odd traditions, worship and, often, the searing memory of a president shot dead in Dallas.

My Thanksgiving Week this year began a day early, on Saturday, at a football game in Palo Alto and then, on Sunday the 22nd the observance of the 28th anniversary of my ordination to the Diaconate. We were at St. Cyprian's Parish in the Fillmore District of S.F. for Joan's return to the pulpit of the parish she served as Rector for 5 years. The hodge-podge of the week continued all day, as we smooched with the parishioners and met family and friends for lunch at the old Ferry Building. The only thing missing was the Pilgrims!

One significant memory in my personal hodge-podge this week: It involves one of San Diego Diocese's greatest priests, Brad Hall, long time rector of St. Margaret's in Palm Desert, dead, alas, these 12 years. The year is, I believe, 1980, the place CDSP Seminary's refectory. Brad hurries along. I stop him and congratulate him on his impending ordination to the diaconate the coming Saturday, adding, 'of course this is only your diaconal ordination; the main event will be next year'. He stopped dead in his tracks and said: "What do you mean? This is my ordination. Anything that follows will change my job description but this is my ordination that sets me apart for the rest of my journey". Wow!!! I have never forgotten that and duly celebrate my anniversary each year.

Now let's look at the lessons: The main theme is DON'T BE AFRAID. Joel tells us: "Do not fear, oh soil; be glad and rejoice, for the pastures of the wilderness are green; the tree bears its fruit, the fig tree and vine give their full yield....be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God...eat in plenty and be satisfied". The Gospel encourages us to be satisfied as well, with what God gives us, without anxiety. This is particularly poignant Thanksgiving season. So many of us have had the financial feet pulled out from under us and this Cathedral family has seen the loss of many valued and dear friends. This year may see empty chairs at our Thanksgiving table and less expensive food and drink. Yet we are invited to trust God, to not be afraid.

My friend Brad Hall put it well in a sermon he preached in August, 1992. I'll close with his remarks: "Jesus was always very clear about not letting life's little burdens distract us from his blessed Kingdom.. He says, 'Fear not' and I believe he means just that. Lighten up, let go of those burdens and preoccupations which distract you from participating in God's blessed Kingdom. 'Do not be anxious about your life—what you shall eat or drink or put on, for life is more than food and the body more than clothing. Consider the birds in the air, the lilies of the field'..Jesus tells us that anxiety, unnecessary worrying about life, will not add a cubit to our span of life. We now know that undue anxiety will

subtract a few cubits from it. So how do we go about 'lightening up' our lives? Well, I've learned that one must be in tune with a larger rhythm of life—the rhythm of the Kingdom.....”

I think it is no accident that Jesus opens his injunction with the words, “Do not worry...” and Brad mentions encouraging simplicity of living, keeping balance between our physical, emotional and spiritual selves to encourage that, but he also invites us to enjoy this outward Kingdom as we nurture our inner one: “take a few more risks and chances” he says...”eat more ice cream and fewer beans, as the popular poem puts it//:. He closes with this: “So on our search for the inner Kingdom, do not be afraid to dive into the outer Kingdom. Who knows, we might even occasionally become, as my favorite poet/philosopher Judith Viorst, puts it, ‘A Wild Thing.’

Yes, we all have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving 2009. We may possess less but we are offered so much more....insight, perspective, love to give each other, even WILD THINGS! Thanks be to our loving God. Amen!!!!

“Come Holy Spirit, Come with your fire and burn us. Come with your rain and cleanse us, Come with your light and reveal to us. Convict us, Convert us Until we do something with our lives.” (Back Cover of THE JOURNEY HOME, The Ministry of the Rev. G. Bradford Hall.1998)