

4/10/17

**An Easter Poem from Rumi
from *The Essential Rumi*, by Coleman Barks**

Everyone has eaten and fallen asleep. The house is empty. We walk out to the garden to let the apple meet the peach, to carry messages between rose and jasmine.

Spring is Christ,
Raising martyred plants from their shrouds.
Their mouths open in gratitude, wanting to be kissed.
The glow of the rose and the tulip means a lamp is inside.
A leaf trembles. I tremble in the wind-beauty like silk from Turkestan.
The censer fans into flame.

This wind is the Holy Spirit.
The trees are Mary.
Watch how husband and wife play subtle games with their hands.
Cloudy pearls from Aden are thrown across the lovers,
as is the marriage custom.

The scent of Joseph's shirt comes to Jacob.
A red carnelian of Yemeni laughter is heard
by Muhammad in Mecca.

We talk about this and that. There's no rest except on these branching moments.

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"And He Shall Rise Again"

He was only twelve years old, but already he knew more about resurrection than most of the adults in his life.

He had never met his father, and the only memory he had of his mother was a fading photograph that he had slept with for the first five years of his life until his caressing of it had rendered her image virtually unrecognizable.

Although he was somewhat envious of his cousin, he did love his aunt and uncle, who had taken him in when his grandmother announced, at his mother's wake, that she was done raising children and, besides, who knew how long she'd be around anyway.

He had kept his first name, Stavros, but had, for convenience, adopted his uncle's surname, Mulvey, thereby lending him a certain cultural ambiguity. This reflected the ambiguity he would eventually discover in almost all of the aspects of his life.

It was difficult to trace where his contemplative streak originated, but from the time he was a child he was able to recognize the sublime in mud. His aunt would take him for walks and he would ask her to stop every few paces so he could examine the journey of an insect across a slab of pavement or an evocative formation of clouds that suggested angels.

When he entered school, he was frequently admonished for his lack of attention when, in reality, his attention was more deeply refined than any of his classmates – although not on what the teacher was saying. He found his teacher’s voice hypnotizing, and the drone of it in the classroom would transport him to places he would rather be – to experience things, people, places, and events he would rather encounter.

It was, in fact, during one of these reveries, that he discovered his life-long aspiration – the dream that would breathe energy into everything he would do afterwards. This particular trance would last for only a moment in his recollection, though judging by what little he could recall about what the teacher was explaining about fractions, was probably a bit longer. In fact, when she called on him to teach back what she had just explained, his tentative response revealed to his bemused classmates a lapse of more than five minutes.

In the dream, Stavros had found himself among ruins. They did not, however, appear to be ancient; rather the result of a recent conflict. He was on his knees, leaning over a form which, though critically injured, was impassive. As he reached for his stethoscope, which he knew intuitively would be around his neck, it became entangled with a cross.

It was only with the gift of hindsight that he was able to assess the experience of first grade with the knowledge that his destiny had been laid out for him from his childhood. And, years later, as he knelt beside the Syrian infant who lay bleeding in the street, he knew that the cross around his neck would be more useful to him at that moment than his stethoscope.

There was virtually nothing left of Aleppo. A quarter of a million people, one third of them children, were forced to rely on the few, remaining local clinics; most of the hospitals had been bombed by Russian and Syrian forces. All this in an effort to terrorize the citizens and destabilize the resistance.

For Stavros, the hardest part was believing that anyone cared what was happening here. He had had hundreds of friends at his ordination in St. Olaf’s. And thousands attended his graduation from U of M Medical School. But he wondered now, kneeling in the street, praying over the soon-to-be lifeless child, whether anyone was even aware where he was or what he was attempting.

Oh, he had heard from friends on occasion. A few even sent donations to support his ministry. Some had even encouraged their organizations to recognize him with a significant monetary gift so he could continue his medical-ministerial work. But, most of the time, he knew that he was relegated to a passing thought or a hasty *Ave*.

Yet, as he continued to kneel there, cradling the now lifeless body of an infant, it began to rain. And, in that baptism, he recalled faded photos, and the salvific love of an aunt and an uncle. He remembered uninvited elementary school visions. And he knew, with total clarity, that he was where he was for a reason. And that reason was Love.

So he got up again.

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Family Meal as Eucharist

From Calvary, the blood of Christ penetrated the earth, consecrating the world and all that grows from it. As the waters in Ezekiel 47 freshen the waters of the Arava, “providing abundant sea life and a shoreline filled with fruit-bearing trees,” the blood of the Christ flows from the sanctuary of his body “making” all the earth holy. It is the task of the presider to proclaim what God has already done. It is *not* the presider’s role to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of the Christ but to proclaim the innate holiness of food and drink.

The shortage of Eucharistic presiders, and the refusal of the Church to credibly address this shortage, deprives many of the blessings of the Eucharist. Yet, there is no shortage of presiders if the head of each household exercises his/her baptismal priesthood and announces to their family what God has already accomplished.

Before the family meal (presuming that the family still gathers for at least one meal a week), the person in the family who is most adept at telling the story should share a passage from scripture. They may read and reflect on a Gospel passage, or invite other members of the family to share their reflections. One or all of the readings from the Lectionary could be used.

Then, following the discussion, all gather around the table, on which may be placed a cup of wine and a piece of bread, in addition to the meal. The leader would pray: Blessed are you, God of all creation. Through your goodness, we have food and drink, which earth has given and human hands have prepared. May they be for us life-giving food and saving drink. Afterward, all pray: May God accept the gifts we offer with praise and thanksgiving, for our good and the good of all.

The leader could then say: Send your Spirit over us and our meal that we may see in these gifts the presence of the Living Christ. (S)he continues: On the night before he died, Jesus took bread into his hands, gave you thanks and praise, broke the bread, gave it to his friends and said, “Take this, all of you, and eat it. This is my body, which is given for you.” The family could then break and share the bread.

The leader continues: Then, Jesus took the cup and said, “Take this, all of you, and drink from it. This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant. It will be shed for you and for all so that sin may be forgiven.” The family may share the cup at this point, or save it for the final cup of blessing at the end of the meal.

Then all say: When we eat, when we drink, we proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes again!

The leader continues with these or similar sentiments: We eat and drink in union with all humanity, and recognize in this meal, and in each other, the Spirit of the Living God. We pray for those who are nourished at other tables (one could remember here those who are not present), and those who are nourished at none (recall those in need). We celebrate our union with those who ate and drank with Jesus (one could name disciples who are especially relevant by virtue of their names, feasts or seasons); and with all those who ate and drank in his name down through the ages.

Then all could say: For through Christ, with Christ and in Christ all glory and honor are yours, Mighty God, forever and ever. Amen.

All recite the "Our Father," followed by the exchange of "Peace." The leader then says: Holy things for God's holy people.

Then all eat and drink.

At the conclusion of the meal, the final cup could be shared if it was not shared earlier; then, final prayers of gratitude could be offered for the meal and for anything else for which the family is grateful.

Before the family leaves the table, or shortly thereafter, the family may want to discuss how they will witness to their faith during the coming days.

At the conclusion of the meal, what is left over should be handled reverently. What is truly waste can be discarded. What is still edible should be saved for leftovers or somehow used to promote life – by being returned to nature.

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