

Trinity II (18 June 2023)

“And the lord said unto the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.’”

+In the Name...

One of the many movie versions of “The Titanic” came out when I was in college. This was the one starring Leonardo DiCaprio, for those of you who might remember. Like all the other versions, at least that I have seen, sadly, the boat still sinks. I have seen it exactly twice: once in the theatre, and once at the end of a double date. Yet, the movie was immensely popular, and I knew people who paid to see it over and over again in the theatres. It made one wonder if the viewers thought maybe if they watched the movie enough times that {Spoiler Alert!} the ship would not sink, and Leonardo DiCaprio would not

freeze to death but live happily ever after with Kate Winslet? More on that later, but now back to the double date:

One of the bed and breakfasts in town decided to make the last dinner served onboard the Titanic before it sank, more or less. I cannot remember the exact reductions now, but it was something like we only had nine courses instead of 12, making allowances for some delicacies that while enjoyed by upper-class society in Edwardian England were not easily obtainable in late 20th century Montana! I remember being so full that I do not know what I would have done with an extra three courses anyway. The point is, it was the feast to end all feasts! It drifted along for hours, and just when you thought the chefs had outdone themselves, something equal or better came along. Yet even this fabulous dinner will pale in comparison to the Banquet we shall experience in Heaven. Portland is known as a food town, but nothing the fine restaurateurs of this city can dish up (and

my stomach has been made very happy at any number of fine dining establishments here locally) will prepare us for our heavenly feasting. Of course, all this feasting is a metaphor for the fact that we will be in the very nearer presence of God. Will we sit down at High Table three times a day, plus Afternoon Tea? Perhaps not, but Scripture promises there will be neither hunger nor sorrow. Whether or not there will be ham or shellfish will not be of primary concern to us, despite the verse immediately prior to where our Gospel reading starts today including the line, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God.”

Our Lord’s description of who ends up at the table is the exact opposite of the dinner on the Titanic. On the famed ship it was only the first-class passengers who ate in such opulent style. In the Gospel lesson, the privileged classes have been deaf to Our Lord’s call, and so their seats at the Messianic Banquet have been given to the poor and less fortunate. Those first invited to the banquet, the farmer, the

rancher, and the newly married are representative of the Jewish people. Christ initially came for them, but they chose not to recognize Him as the Messiah and the Son of God. Because there was room at the table, others were invited: first were those called from the streets and lanes of the city. They were the underprivileged Jews, not those who held important positions in the temple. Next the servant called those from “the highways and the hedges”. These are the “outsiders”, that is, the Gentiles, those who are outside the Jewish faith. This is the equivalent of the first-class passengers being offered the lifeboats on the Titanic but turning them down with various and sundry excuses. Then the steward offers those same seats to the 2nd Class Passengers, but they turn them down for similar reasons. Finally the lifeboats are offered to the 3rd Class passengers, who realize that the “unsinkable” ship is going down!

We cannot imagine turning down a seat on a lifeboat that would enable us to get off a sinking ship, yet don't we witness others effectively do just that all the time? Think of the world as a sinking ship, the ill-fated Titanic, if you will. I do not mean in an "It's the end of the world; Armageddon is upon us," sort-of way. I mean that we know that ultimately following the ways of the world instead of the ways of God will not be beneficial for our immortal soul. If the world is the Titanic, then the Church is the lifeboat. I grew up Methodist, where virtually all the inside of the church building was called the "sanctuary". But in liturgical churches, the sanctuary is only the space between the east wall ("liturgical east") and the altar rail. Sanctuary comes from the Latin word "sanctus" meaning "holy" because that is where the ordinary bread and wine are turned into the Body and Blood of Christ, making it the holiest part of the building. Where the pews are is the "nave" which comes from the Latin word for ship,

hence “navy”. The church building is the vessel through which the faithful navigate the stormy seas of life. In traditional architecture, like St. Mark’s, the roof and walls even look like an upside-down ship.

Our foretaste of that Heavenly Banquet is, of course, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, receiving Our Lord: Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Holy Communion. A week and a half ago the Church celebrated the Feast of Corpus Christi. Maundy Thursday celebrates the institution of the Eucharist, but it gets grouped in with foot washing and the stripping of the altar, not to mention the sorrows of Good Friday. Corpus Christi was added to the calendar in the early 14th century as an opportunity joyously to celebrate the privilege of receiving Christ’s Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. The feast always falls on a Thursday but is sometimes moved to the following Sunday (including in this parish), but with St. Barnabas

falling on the Sunday last week I decided to leave Corpus Christi where it was.

We have the privilege of receiving Christ each and every Sunday at this Parish, not always a given in the history of Anglicanism. I remember Ruth Tunturi saying, “Ah, converted again for another week,” as she came out of church, having received the Blessed Sacrament. What’s more, Holy Mass is offered here every day, giving one the opportunity to remember a favorite saint, offer thanksgiving for renewed health after missing a Sunday, or just lifting one’s soul a little closer to Heaven. When we try and go it alone, are we not, brethren, like those movie-goers, who keep watching the same movie and hoping for a different outcome? The ship is always going to sink, as surely as our lives will sink without God!

I feel like I am always running a week behind: last weekend was the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi and when the fleet

was here for the Rose Festival, but the readings did not match up until today. But as we sang in our closing hymn last Sunday, our God will “shield [us] from rock and tempest, fire and foe, [and] protect [us] wheresoe’er [we] go.” We just have to get on the life raft that is headed to that Heavenly Banquet. I promise: it will beat whatever they are serving in the first-class section of a cruise ship any day!

+In the Name...

Announcements:

Fathers Day

Matching Funds

Office closed M & T