

Thank You

29 May 2011

1 Peter 3:13-27 John 14:15-21

1 Peter 3:8 f

“All of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of one another, a tender heart and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse but, on the contrary repay with blessing. It is for this you were called- that you might inherit blessing’

Repay with a blessing, be a blessing, that you might inherit blessing,

Today is thanksgiving Sunday, when we focus on the love we receive and share from the one in whose name we live and move and have in our being. Acts 17:28

When we focus on the blessing we have received, our intention is to share so we are Christ’s love in this world.

Chastiser writes : (p 157 The Monastery of the Heart)

‘The conversion of life that is the basis of (Benedictine) holiness comes when (as a Monastery of the Heart) we finally realise that God’s will for us is that we come to realize that all things are of God – all the moments of our lives, however stumbling they may be – and that all things call us to melt into one great paeon of praise for the joy of having found the God we continue to seek’.
‘the joy of having found the God we continue to seek’.

Part of this blessing is to offer hospitality. Again Chittester writes:

*When Benedict of Nursia began
his new way of living
in wild, licentious, sixth-century Rome,
he turned that world upside down*

*He took into his monastic community
The rich and the poor,
the slave and the free,
the young and the old,
artists and craftsmen.
Peasants and noblemen.
It was a motley crew.*

*And then, as if that weren’t enough,
he opened the doors
of the monastery
to anyone who came,
at any time,
to anyone who knocked,
no matter who they were
or where they had been in life
along the way.*

*“Great care and concern
are to be shown.”
(his Rule goes on,
“in receiving poor people
and pilgrims because in them*

*more particularly
Jesus is received.”*

*The point is clear:
the guest (to the Benedictine) is much more
than simply another social contact.*

*Guests, the unknown and the wandering other,
are the final
and authentic addition
to any (Benedictine) community.*

*Without them,
the very notion of (Benedictine) community
is suspect,
is nothing but more of the same.
Without the guest
We make the community life
all about us alone.*

*Families that concentrate
only on themselves
do not build up
the entire human family.*

*We (The Benedictine) ,
on the other hand
are actually on the lookout for guests –
for their needs,
for their wisdom.*

*The guest (in Benedictine spirituality)
is a visit from the God of Surprises
who comes upon us
at our most vulnerable
and breaks us open
to a new part of ourselves
as well as the needs of the other.*

*Guests bring the word in,
place it at our feet
and dare us to be
who and what we say we are.
They are a blatant sign
for all to see
that any group that calls itself
(A Monastery of the Heart)
a community
but exists
only for itself and its own kind
is really not a real community
at all.*

*(A Monastery of the Heart)
Our goal at Holy Covenant*

*is to be a community with stretchable,
permeable,
illimitable boundaries
made up of anyone who happens
to come into it
at any time
and always saying,
“We are here for you”*

– from *The Monastery of the Heart:
An Invitation to a meaningful Life*
By Joan Chittister
(Bluebridge/United Tribes Media Inc.)

That is true thanksgiving – opening our heart to the other – in us and beyond us. For there we find our heart’s desire. We find ‘the God we continue to seek’.

Yesterday’s stall selling cakes and slices, and collecting food for St John’s Care – in a public place – to show our love to the other, to smile, to offer hospitality ...

Joan Chittister writes: *“The guest intrudes on our schedules and makes demands on our energy and pries open our closed minds and stretches our hearts to the breaking point”*

Here is a story from the monastic tradition.

There was a monastery that was renowned for its hospitality, a welcoming place for many weary travellers in need of rest. One day while the abbot was deep in prayer an angel appeared surrounded by golden light. The abbot gazed in rapt contemplation and was filled with a peace beyond measure. Suddenly a series of heavy knocks resounded on the front door. It is some weary traveller come to find shelter. The abbot said to himself, “What should I do? If I go and answer the door, the angel might disappear. If I stay, who will care for the traveller?”

Reluctantly the abbot rose, looked resignedly at the angel, and left the room in order to attend to the needs of the dust-strained traveller.

When he returned to his cell, the angel, to the abbots great surprise, was still there. The angel said to him, “Had you not gone to help the needy traveller, I myself would have been compelled to leave.”

The daily prayers recited by those who are doing the Monasteries of the Heart retreat has these lines:

*Enable us to grow
in the spirit
in ways that make us ...
loving listeners
to the heartbeat of the world ...
Give us hearts
where all may enter in ...*

What does it mean to you to be a ‘loving listener to the heartbeat of the world ... to have a heart where all may enter in?’

In the book *‘An Altar in the world* Barbara Brown Taylor writes that people want ‘not more about God. More God’.

She suggests that from the youngest to the oldest, we experience ‘more God’ through spirit-filled community where love is given free expression. *Seasons of the Spirit* 117

To love Jesus is to keep Jesus Commandments Jn 13:34 records one such commandment, 'Just as I have loved you, you should love one another'.
God's love for us is not conditional on our obedience. Rather, love of God and neighbour fulfils the words of Christ who is God's very expression of love for us.

It is important to note that Jesus in this reading from John speaks in the second person plural. The "you" who will not be who will know the unity of God in Christ is the community as a whole. Jesus prepares the community, not just individuals, to live and love life in Christ presumes life in community.

Power in Christian Community is given a fresh understanding by the Spirit's gift and love's command. Power is not the ability to Power comes in the revealing of love.

As promised, God's presence abides in us through Spirit – advocate, comforter, to encourage – and the practice of love – love expressed in word and deed. It is God's spirit that enables and blesses our witness (Seasons of the Spirit p 116)

Jn 14:15 If you love me you will keep my commandments, and he will give you another advocate (like Jesus was when he was present) to be with you forever.

Ways to express gratitude
be a blessing
inherit a blessing...giving to

St John's Care
Martung Upah Appeal
Forc

How can you be a blessing this week?

Susanna