

TRINITY NEWS

Epiphany VI Seek Reconciliation Before You Enter the Temple - Matthew 5:21-26.

The narrative in the section cited above is a warning about offering a gift to God before the altar without being reconciled. That is, to any person who 'accompanied' us to the chosen sacred place as part of our memory-list of past and present estranged people.

This warning about moving towards God in worship or self vindication without owning the brokenness in our lives implies consequences. The little snapshot at the end of the cited text has both the accuser and the accused in a disputed matter walking together to the court to face a judge. This may seem far-fetched to us. But it is not far-fetched to say that if the matter is not resolved someone will be punished. The outcome of all unresolved disputes is that someone gets punished. This may be directly or indirectly, but it happens. That which is unresolved never brings rewards or lasting happiness. So the accused in this episode is warned that unless he comes to terms with the accuser, then he will be thrown into prison. The offence is clearly about money, because he will not be let out until he has paid the equivalent of what he has taken. This may be in money lost from his own income while is in prison, or the shame of being in prison for a time measured forever in his reputation, or the sheer cost of an unresolved matter in his own psyche and identity.

We cannot hide our 'shadow face' from ourselves or from God. When we come into a church to offer worship we intentionally place ourselves in the focused gaze of God. Adam hiding from God in the Garden of Eden is a biblical example of the futility of trying to evade the gaze of God. It seems to be activated by trying to flee from it. Adam's conversation with the serpent is a mirror image of a conversation within himself. We are often in conversation with the serpent when it tells us that we can do this or that when we know it is contrary to our collective experience of the guidance of God.

The serpent is only a symbol for the conversation within ourselves all the time between our collected images of what we understand to be the will of God and the wayward aspects of our being, sometimes called the shadow. We don't like to examine some of the aspects of the shadow because they may represent some of our real desires and our resistance to them. We tend to project some of these often unrecognised elements onto people we don't like and sometimes even onto people that we are trying to help. We may even seek to help some people because the weaknesses that have dragged their lives down are in fact our own weaknesses. When we say 'weakness' we enter the minefield of definitions, because one person's weakness may be another person's strength and vice versa. But we still have a tendency to do it, and people in the helping professions need to be profoundly aware of it.

We cannot express love when we are filled with hate. We cannot worship God with unresolved matters nagging at our innards. Christ went on his way to the Cross and looked down at the Cross on the hardened faces of his accusers, but he saw in them some of the things that had tugged at his own humanity, and then he could be reconciled to them. Before God could reconcile the world to himself through Christ, the Crucified Christ also had to reconcile himself to those who stared at him with a mixture of hatred, rejection and the nagging suspicion that somehow or other they were doing something that was incredibly wrong. That is always a very disturbing cocktail of emotions!

When we come to worship we are not worshipping a God who is out there, perched on some distant star, but a Presence that has never left us since we were born and will never leave us. But we can put blocks in the way by refusing to be reconciled to ourselves and others. As Wilkie Au says, "Conversion of heart requires that we extend to ourselves the same kind of acceptance that God so readily gives to us." Amen.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday, February 19.

- Bible Study, 10:00 a.m.

Readings for next Sunday:

Leviticus 19:1-2,9-18; Psalm 71; I Corinthians 3:10-11,16-23; Matthew 5:38-48

Shrove Tuesday **Pancake Supper**



Episcopal Church of the Holy Trinity

48 McKinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati

Tuesday, March 4, 2014

5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.



Sausages; English & American pancakes