

The People Complained  
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The people complained. I can tell you this about the folks back home in Boston. When winter wears on we complain. When the hazy, hot and humid days of summer wear on, we complain. It can get too wet. It can get too dry. And as for the traffic, or the subway service. The one universal is; we complain. I wanted to let you know you are not alone. Cindy and I were out for lunch Friday noon, and there was a bit of a flurry underway. We overheard someone say; "I'm sick of winter!" We both looked at each other and chuckled; "You ain't seen nuthin' yet, dearie!" And we sure have no idea what a Montana winter looks like or feels like. But I suspect we'll find out. And when we do, I suspect we'll complain about it.

And so it was that in the wilderness as the people wandered through the desert wastes, there was no bread, no meat, no water and no vegetables like there was back in Egypt. And so the people complained. In Hebrew word is literally; "they murmured." Ah yes, how exquisitely human!

Moses, "Why did you bring us out here to die in the wilderness?" But God heard the people's murmuring and recognized their heartaches and rained down bread from heaven. He gave them quail to eat at night and in the morning he gave them "manna" that would keep body and soul together.

They ran around in the morning gathering the stuff saying in Hebrew: "Manna" which literally means "What is it?" And so, that is what they called it. "What is it?" "Manna?" It was just enough to preserve them through those long, long years of wandering through the desert wastes. It was a way to humble them and let them know that we do not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. We are still learning that lesson.

When we come to this Altar Rail Sunday by Sunday, we come to the "What is it?" of the Body of Christ. The "Magnum Mysterium" of God's Presence in the the Person of Jesus is here in our very midst. It is placed in our hands by a parish priest. We too are fed by the Bread of Heaven. God's living Being shared among us. We remember that night when Jesus told us to love one another and then gave thanks to God, broke bread, said the blessing and gave it to us. Likewise after Supper he did the same with the Cup of Salvation.

Remember the marvels God has done for us. By the way, class, what are the Five Mighty Acts of God our Catechism teaches us to acknowledge and proclaim in our faith? The Divine Drama has Five Acts like any great Shakespearean Drama.

1. Act 1: The Creation
2. Act 2: The Exodus and the Law
3. Act 3: Jesus Christ
4. Act 4: The Church

## 5. Act 5: The Christian Hope

It is one thing to say God has acted in history; it is another to say how. Perhaps by naming these five mighty modes of action you can recognize that God continues to be active throughout history and within your own life as well. God is always creating, freeing, and inviting us into obedience to him. God is clearly incarnate in the person of Jesus in every human life particularly as we come to know the love and forgiveness that God intends for us. In the church we come to know how community relationships participate in the formation of our Christian nature. And finally in The Christian Hope we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus in which we all participate through Baptism. We share together in the Whole Mystery of God in community.

And while we are speaking of community isn't it interesting that we speak of God in community as well. When we name God as Trinity, we are not speaking merely of a static doctrine, we are speaking of a dynamic community. God is not just our Creator, God is also our Savior. God is our Sanctifier. We name God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As we interact with one another we recognize something of God within each other as we see the marvels of creativity. We see the Jesus within each other as we see how we reach out to one another to salvage what we can of each other when in distress for instance. And I will say this about the Holy Spirit; her name interestingly enough is Hagia Sophia the Holy Wisdom from on High, the gift giver who abundantly bestows upon each of us gifts for ministry. The Biblical word for Spirit is in the feminine form and therefore encourages to experience all the fullness of God.

This world needs a church that sees God in such dynamic terms. There is much that seeks to destroy the creatures of God in this world. That's called sin. Yes. On occasion we need to use that word. Just last week a dear friend of mine lost a grandson to a drug overdose; 18 years old he was. I don't know why he did what he did. Or the thousand more who do the same? But I do know that so many of our young people lack hope. There is no work for so many of our inner city and rural poor. If we cannot come up with a way to save our young, we are merely an anemic and ineffectual presence. Is it any wonder our young are no longer a vital presence in the church. I think we need to find a way to organize our life around their needs now and engage the entire community fabric around us so that we can be the hope of the future.

That's why I like to think of God as dynamic community. God as creative, God as redemptive, God as the one who makes all holy; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This, I submit to you is how we are to engage the powers and the principalities.

In today's Gospel the landowner sends us out to do the work God wants us to do. The harvest is plenteous, the laborers are few. That is to say there are so many human needs. When the church has been at its most effective, that's how we have organized our life. Celtic Christians for instance, organized their work around the sick, the dying, the hungry, those in need of education, interestingly enough. They were also master cooks and made wonderful beer as the record shows. They were cheerful sorts in a depressing world. To them the Gospel was Good news and brought joy to the world.

As we go forth to do God's work, the landowner finds others idle as the day wears on. Why are you standing there idle? Nobody has hired us? They were bored to tears. They resorted to crime, perhaps alcoholism. I suspect they complained too. But God challenges us with this notion of discipleship; There are always unmet human needs.

As Matthew's Gospel enumerates in the 25th chapter, there are always those who are hungry, thirsty, there are strangers who needs your welcome, naked, sick, imprisoned. How interesting that this is how Jesus judges the nations of the earth; in the same manner as the "least of these" are treated.

Allow me to add our inner city and rural young who are easy pickings for alcohol and drug abuse or criminal activity. I think the landowner's question is a legitimate one. Why are we standing idly by when there are so many unmet human needs?

It doesn't matter when we go. First thing in the morning or late in the day. To Jesus the first and the last are one and the same.

What I find most compelling about this Gospel passage is that whenever we respond to human need and do the ministry God has sent us to do the Kingdom of Heaven immediately breaks in upon us. It satisfies something deep within the human soul when we respond to the needs of those beset right now by disaster. Whether in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, or Mexico, there hundreds of thousands, if not millions in a chorus of human suffering crying out to us for help. We keep writing checks to the Episcopal Relief and Development Fund and I'm sure there are many of you who do also to the Red Cross or other charity. Likewise the Cathedral Social Concerns Committee seeks to respond to many local human needs.

This is God at work. God as Creator, Savior and Gift Giver; in the dynamic community known as the Church. This is who we are called to be! First, last, always. St. Paul writes in today's Epistle; "live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

Still, the people complain. We will be all too human. That goes with the territory as any parish priest or administrator will tell you. But living the Gospel life and keeping our eyes on kingdom work by caring for one another in our needs, that's what will satisfy the community of God within us. We will become creative, we will save each other in the midst of every disaster, we will bring to bear the gifts God has so lavishly bestowed up on us wisely.

This community of faith known as the Holy Trinity is far more than a doctrine. The dynamic community of God is knit into every human heart.

In the Name of God; the Most Holy, Undivided and Everlasting Trinity. Amen.

Fr Paul