

Homily for the Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary, Year C.

Someone said, ironically, "If you get gloomy, just take an hour off and sit and think how much better this world is than hell. Of course, it won't cheer you up much if you expect to go there."

We do not expect to go there. On the contrary, if you get gloomy, just take an hour off and sit and think who's coming to dinner. "Here I stand at the door and knock. If anyone opens, I will enter and have supper with him and he with me."

Who is knocking, and whose door is it? It is God knocking, which means Endless Love and Eternal Life. It is our door, which means our deepest desire, that he's knocking at. And if we are sometimes gloomy, it might even be that the door is our gloom and discontent, for gloom is just our desire seen from another angle. God shows up in all kinds of unexpected ways, at unexpected times -- even our gloom won't put him off, and our desire for things other than him will not make him jealous and turn away angry.

In the Gospel, Jesus shows us God as a rich guy with servants coming home after a night of partying. In fact, it being the Middle East, and it having been a wedding he was attending, it was not just a night but a week of partying. Undoubtedly, then, this rich guy's a little tipsy. His servants are ready to give him coffee and a bath and then put him to bed.

But before they can do that, this guy puts to work and cooks them all a magnificent meal and himself serves the servants whom he had first made recline.

This is God. If you get gloomy, think of that. Think of your gloom as a door behind which is God.

Abraham and Sarah could have been gloomy. Sarah was old and no more hope had she for children. Abraham was old, good as dead, it says. And yet, from them, to them, more descendants than the stars of heaven.

Instead of gloom, Abraham and Sarah had faith, and the reading makes the point that faith is the special virtue, the secret strength, of the aged. As good as dead, from one point of view, but on the threshold of the very abundance of the Sacramento Valley in summer, from another.

At this Eucharist, at every Eucharist, at this table, it is God himself who greets us, sits us down, and serves us -- reversing our gloom, retorning our youth, without diminishing the wisdom of our years, the wisdom that sees the stars where others see only the night.

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