The fifth Wednesday in Lent
Rolling Meadows, Illinois 3-24-71

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Luke 23: 28: DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, DO NOT WEEP FOR ME, BUT WEEP FOR YOURSELVES, AND FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

More than ANY OTHER human institution, I BELIEVE in the OVER-ARCHING IMPORTANCE of the CHRISTIAN FAMILY - the CHRISTIAN HOME. I BELIEVE that "GOD HAS SET THE SOLITARY INTO FAMILIES" - and that in DOING SO He had a PURPOSE in mind. What ~~ever it~~ is that a MAN is to BECOME in this LIFE, he gets a START TOWARD that in a FAMILY of some kind. In a SENSE, we ARE what our FAMILIES have MADE US.

~~Well~~ So, IF the FAMILY is so TREMENDOUSLY IMPORTANT, WHAT MAKES THE FAMILY SEEM SO FLIMSY? WHY DOES IT CRUMBLE? WHY DOESN'T IT HAVE MORE BUILT IN VITALITY? WHY ARE SO MANY FAMILIES BREAKING APART? - ~~SPLITTING LIKE THE UNSPLITTABLE ATOM?~~ On His WAY of SORROWS and on the CROSS our Lord had some ANSWERS to these QUESTIONS.

When JESUS PASSED WEEPING MOTHERS on the WAY to His CROSS, He said to them: "WEEP NOT FOR ME, BUT WEEP FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR YOUR CHILDREN." Mothers KNOW a LOT about WEEPING. When a BABY is SMALL and SWEET, things are FINE. But as it GROWS OLDER and MORE INDEPENDENT and finally SPURNS advice or even LEAVES HOME - then come the TEARS! MOTHERS are GLAD while the HOUSEHOLD is in TACT, and the FATHER is FAITHFUL and EMPLOYED and ALL GOES WELL. But MOTHERS WEEP when SPOUSES ROAM, or when INCOME FAILS, or when DEATH STRIKES.

or children rebell

Today we speak MUCH about the GENERATION GAP. There is NO DISTANCE at all BETWEEN MOTHER and the BABY at her breast. The DISTANCE is IMMEASURABLY GREATER when the CHILD is a TEENAGER.

Notice that the CAUSE of the TEARS in EVERY INSTANCE is SEPARATION. The FAMILY is MADE to be a UNIT - to WORK TOGETHER. Husband and wife, BROTHER and SISTER, even GRANDPARENTS FIT into the PATTERN... SEPARATION COMES not just with REMOVAL - but with REFUSAL to ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER - to WORK and PLAY and PRAY TOGETHER - to be ONE HOUSEHOLD! That REFUSAL makes for TEARS.

"WHAT HAS HAPPEN TO US?" is the anguished question that RISES from MANY a FAMILY that is STRAINING at the SEAMS. How can PEOPLE who ONCE had such HIGH REGARD for ONE ANOTHER now BECOME so HEARTLESS and COLD and BITTER? What IS the EXPLOSIVE that FRAGMENTS the FAMILY?

God MADE the FAMILY! He DESIGNED the MAN and the WOMAN to be ONE FLESH - their CHILDREN to be like OLIVE SHOOTS from the MAIN STEM. He proposed that the HOUSEHOLD be the FIRST TRAINING GROUND for LOVE. The TEARS that MARK FAMILY STRESS and DISASTER are the SIGNALS that God is NOT having HIS WAY - that His PLAN is GOING BAD.

"WEEP NOT FOR ME," said Jesus on the way to the CROSS. He had SET OUT on a PROGRAM of REUNIFICATION. It would COST Him HIS LIFE. As He HUNG there on the CROSS and FACED the FEARSOME PRICE for BRINGING MEN BACK TO GOD, He did NOT THINK only of MANKIND in general. He LOOKED at the hooting MOB and PRAYED for it. He LOOKED at the penitent THIEF and FORGAVE HIM. And He LOOKED at His SORROWING MOTHER under the CROSS and GAVE HER a NEW SON - - He TOLD John to think of her as HIS OWN MOTHER. Jesus DIED for the SINS of the WORLD. But in the very ACT HE proposed to put PEOPLE to WORK again OVERCOMING their VERY OWN LOVELESSNESS - the WORLD'S WORST SIN!

MARY and JOHN felt VERY CLOSE to JESUS under the CROSS. There is NO SUBSTITUTE for that SORT of CLOSENESS. He is READY to be as CLOSE to YOUR FAMILY TOO! He is READY to BRIDGE that GAP from CALVERY to your OWN HOME - and SPEAK the RECONCILING WORD to YOUR family situation. .....He went ALL THE WAY FOR US to the FATHER that He might COME ALL THE WAY to US IN OUR HOMES. THINK about HIM - TALK about HIM - PRAY to the FATHER in HIS NAME - FACE the TASKS AND THE JOYS - the FRETTING and the CONCERNS of EACH DAY - IN HIM! Remember that HE DIED and ROSE again to HOLD US who are BAPTIZED in HIS NAME TOGETHER IN ONE!

Jesus spoke STRONG WORDS to the WOMEN on the WAY of SORROWS. His WORDS ARE for ALL OF US in ANY SITUATION in LIFE.

This is TRUE because the DAMAGE that GOES ON in the CRUMBLING of FAMILIES is CLOSELY akin to MANY OTHER PHASES of LIFE. FRIENDSHIP, BUSINESS, COMMUNITY LIFE - - - they ALL provide a DISPLAY of this MALFUNCTION of HUMAN NATURE - this FRAGMENTING of PERSON from PERSON. At the BOTTOM of it is ALWAYS the SPLITTING OFF from GOD who MADE us to BELONG TOGETHER.

This means that the REAL TROUBLE is NOT just TEMPER or PERSONALITY or INCOMPATIBILITY. God's Word for it is DEATH! God made PEOPLE to be ALIVE so that they might BE TOGETHER. When they SLIP APART in the MANY SPASMS of SELFISHNESS that make up LIFE this side of the GRAVE, this is a SYMPTOM not just of POOR PERSONALITY, but of persons CUTTING OFF from GOD who is THEIR LIFE. When THINGS GO WRONG in the FAMILY, this is just a TYPE of OUR WITHDRAWAL FROM GOD.

It is a TERRIBLE thing to DIE. That is the END of WORK - of PROMISE - of MEANING to OTHERS! The BIBLE doesn't have TWO WORDS for the DEATH of the HUMAN BODY

and the SPLITTING OFF of the HUMAN BEING from GOD. It is as though the SACRED WRITERS try to FIND an ANALOGY for that SPLIT that is as DRASTIC and FINAL as they can MAKE it = and so they CALL it DEATH - - DEATH of the ~~LIGHT~~ LIFE of GOD in a HUMAN BEING.

And just as the SIGNS of DEATH are ALL AROUND US, so they are EVIDENT in the FAMILY. Husband and wife can TURN AWAY from each other in the morning AFTER a DISAGREEMENT and get their MINDS on SOMETHING ELSE all day. CHILDREN trot off to SCHOOL, and OTHER THINGS occupy their MINDS besides the DISCORD and DISSENSION in the HOME. But the FAMILY is BASIC! For this is where HUSBAND and WIFE are to GAIN the VITALITY and COMPOSURE for the REST of their TASKS. This is where CHILDREN are to FIND the CHARACTER, the POISE, and the STRENGTH for the NEXT STAGE of their GROWING UP.

Above all, the FAMILY is to be a sorce of CHEER and of JOY! How WONDERFUL it is if a CHILD is TRAINED to have a SUNNY DISPOSITION - One that MIRRORS the QUALITY that SURROUNDS it in the HOME! How WONDERFUL if the BIBLICAL MAXIMS: "DO ALL THINGS WITH THANKSGIVING," and, "DO ALL THINGS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS," are NOT DEAD LETTERS, but have their MEANING in the CHILD'S MIND because of the PRACTICE of the FAMILY. It is then that the HOUSEHOLD becomes a GARDEN in which PLANTS NEW and OLD are NURTURED so that they BRING FORTH FRUIT.

That is why, in JESUS' PLAN, the HOME MEANS SO MUCH! Our HEAVENLY FATHER used a FAMILY to be the WAY that HIS SON took over the TASK of REDEEMING the WORLD. A GOOD MAN was the guardian of His BIRTH and TAUGHT HIM his TRADE of CARPENTRY. A GOOD WOMAN was His mother, who pondered all the GREAT THINGS

that she DISCOVERED about His being SENT to be the REDEEMER and KEPT them in her HEART. It was at a WEDDING that she SUGGESTED that He do His FIRST MIRACLE. With the REST of the FAMILY she asked to SEE JESUS and GAVE HIM the OPPORTUNITY to say: "HE THAT DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER IN HEAVEN IS MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHER AND MY SISTER."

The WHOLE RESOURCE of GOD'S LOVE in CHRIST is directed toward ESTABLISHING and MAINTAINING the FAMILY. That is why the CHURCH is sometimes refered to as being "THE FAMILY OF GOD." Our Lord designed a MEAL of THANKSGIVING as a METHOD of KEEPING HIM and HIS REDEEMING WORK ~~FOR~~ Before US ~~AL~~ at ALL TIMES. We LOVE to EAT! It becomes a TIME for SOCIBILITY ~~and~~ CHATTER and GOOD CHEER! Jesus SUGGESTED that we should EAT znd DRINK HIS BODY and BLOOD - that which He GAVE for US on the CROSS - to REMEMBER how He COMPLETED the GREAT TASK of REUNITING us with GOD by the FORGIVENESS of OUR SINS - - that we should DO THIS to REMEMBER HIM! As the EARLY CHURCH did this, it began to call ~~the~~ it an OCCASION of THANKSGIVING - THE THANKSGIVING - THE EUCHARIST! It is a TIME of CHEER and REJOICING that can PERVADE all the associations of OUR LIFE WITH ONE ANOTHER AS CHRISTIANS - and DRAW OUR HOUSEHOLDS and FAMILIES TOGETHER into the LARGER HOUSEHOLD of GOD - THE CHRISTIAN ~~CONGREGATION~~. Church

As we PRACTICE our REMEMBRANCE of JESUS CHRIST at HOME EVERYDAY - EVERY MORNING and EVENING - with ALL the JOYS and SORROWS and TEARS - the GROWTH and the DISAPPOINTMENTS that HAPPEN there - - - we GAIN a HEADSTART on ALL of LIFE, and it ALL becomes LIFE in the FAMILY of GOD. Amen.