



May 2013 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ –

May grace and peace be yours in abundance (1 Peter 1:2a).

As we move into the season of graduation from Seminary, planning for Ordinations and Consecrations, and transitioning into First Calls, I am reminded of my recent Ordination as Bishop on January 26, 2013. “Celebration” is one of the words I would use to describe the worship; another would be “gifts,” as many gifts were shared prior to and during the worship.

One of these gifts was a poem my wife, Cathy, and I commissioned for the Ordination from Dr. Faith Nostbakken, a member of Glory Lutheran, Sherwood Park. Faith has earned several degrees in English, Theology and Spiritual Direction, is currently a candidate in the Diaconal Ministry track, and has a wonderful, creative ability in crafting words and texts.

In shaping the poem, which Faith read during the Ordination, she considered the texts for the worship, the hymns selected for congregational song and ensemble singing, as well as a handful of images, metaphors and pastoral themes which are deeply meaningful to me.

This poem was one of the many gifts shared at the Ordination, a gift which I will return to again and again as I serve in this new calling, and one which I now share with you.

Ordination

Nobody asks for drowning, certainly not the infant
gently tilted head towards the font,
arms and legs splayed suddenly with fear,
maybe a whimper or a shrill cry
as the robed one sifts through the sparkling water
and touches the tiny brow, barely downy with hair,
the rhythm of “The Father. . . and of the Son . . . and of the Holy Spirit”
incanted before a finely woven linen cloth dabs away the drops.
Everyone so easily forgets that dying can begin like this,
the cross fingered again on the forehead at the dawn of each new day.

Nobody asks to have her feet washed either,

not on Maundy Thursday even, unless her shoes
are polished, her stockings free of runs and easily removed,
her toenails trimmed and filed that very morning.
Maybe then she offers but can't quite face the eyes
of the one who silently lifts her foot from the basin,
wraps it awkwardly in a freshly laundered towel,
drying the creases between each toe.
Most would rather forget how almost embarrassing it is
to be served this way by a neighbor or a friend
much less the One incarnated in this sacred, tender act.

Nobody asks to be called into paradox either
when the people proclaim, "You lead!"
and in the same voice add, "You serve!"
our meanings translated into as many tongues
as join in song and blessing on this day.
Wash my feet, but don't embarrass me.
Splash my head with the font's damp cross
but don't let me stay in the drowning.
As you shepherd, walk beside us;
notice how cracked our feet really are,
how chapped our hands,
and whenever we meet eye-to-eye,
(especially try to meet us there)
call us brother, sister, as we are yours,
and remind us, so we don't forget,
of the wondrous ache and splendor
of love made whole first by being broken,
made new first by dying,
made perfect by the One whose body
here and now we are,
heads, hands, feet, eyes, tongues and all.

*The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by
the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).*

In Christ Jesus –
Shalom,
+Larry

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