

Grounded 6

Let's start with confession: I find virtual Masses unsatisfying. They provoke hunger without consummation. Fill my little screen with big Pentecostal preachers any day. In quarantine, watching pale priests sup together then fade out is a kind of fast.

Maybe that's the point. On Good Friday we fast from Jesus because He's gone, in the tomb. We feasted at table, leaned on His holy chest, and now...our realized hope is but a body memory. We ache for Him. We ache more now. Yes, He is Risen, but in Covid-9-time the light of Life shines on an extended Good Friday.

We hunger and our roots fan out. Pope Emeritus Benedict muses on how Catholics going without Eucharist for a time invites our love to plunge deeper. 'Voluntary spiritual fasting visually expresses the fact that we all need that healing of love which the Lord perfected in the ultimate loneliness of the Cross. Sometimes we need to hunger...if we are to understand the suffering of hungry brothers.' Those 'brothers' apply to all Christians who for a variety of reasons are not free to partake of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church.

Since becoming a Catholic nine years ago, I have taken communion without my family. Daughter Katie joined me when she became Catholic a few years ago. Separate tables: nothing divides the fellowship of Christians like the Eucharist. A benefit in this 'fast' has been a deeper appreciation of the whole Body of Christ, and the traditions common to my evangelical (of many stripes) family members. In hunger I draw from their gifts and eat heartily.

Annette has cultivated a profound love of her Anglican tradition of Eucharist through leadership in Altar Guild where she shepherds and mobilizes devout women who care for the altar—its vessels and linens. Someone must set the table for Jesus and His people and these servants do it with exquisite care. Annette ached for her love of Jesus at altar during this quarantine. I was privileged to escort her into the church, darkened since early March, to strip the altar. This most solemn of annual events is typically reserved for Maundy Thursday. It was emotional, pregnant with meaning, as she carefully instructed me how to help her lay the altar bare in prep for reunion—His rising, and the congregation's yet-to-be-determined next gathering.

For Holy Week, Annette and I thoroughly enjoyed our son Nick's virtual version. Alongside his cohort Peter in Austin, the two laid a fine table—smart, funny, profound. Nick takes me to new depths. Afterwards, my other kids and I opened our Bibles to reflect upon the stunning humility, and hope, of Jesus' self-giving.

We united in His love. He invited us and we encircled Him, as if for a few shining moments we partook of Jesus at the same table.