

Good Friday
April 10, 2009
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Taken, Blessed, Broken, and Shared: A Personal Look

Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 116
Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9
John 18:1-19:42

“Imitate the mystery you celebrate...”

Yesterday, I preached on four important actions that are part of the Eucharistic mystery that is central to our lives. Today, I am going to briefly share with you my own personal experience of these four actions as they manifest themselves in my priesthood. They are all part of God’s constant call for each of us to “imitate the mystery” we celebrate in the Eucharist.

TAKEN

Before a man gets ordained a priest, he must explain to his bishop *why* he desires to be ordained. This was not an easy thing to do. After much prayer and thought, I remember honestly telling Bishop McDonald that I *didn’t* desire to be ordained a priest, but I desired to do God’s will and felt that God was calling me to the priesthood. In a letter I wrote to Bishop McDonald I explained, “My desire for priesthood can only be measure in accord with my desire to do the will of God.”

This is just another way of saying that it is God who chooses us and not the other way around. Before we can begin an authentic vocation and before we can even begin a simple act of charity, it is important for us to be aware of the fact that we were taken, or chosen, by Christ for that particular service. There are many times when I feel inadequate and unsuccessful in ministry. It is during such times that I am tempted to abandon those ministries, but God lovingly reminds me that *He* chose me for those things and it is not my choice whether or not to do them.

BLESSED

I can’t imagine doing anything with my life other than being a priest. I feel very blessed to have been called to this wonderful vocation! God has been challenging me lately to be more consciously aware of just how blessed I am. Through a nightly gratitude journal, I have been growing in my awareness of the big and little blessings that make up each day. As I continue to grow in my priesthood and in gratitude, I find myself more and more thankful for not only the good things, but for the difficult and painful experiences, as well.

BROKEN

The radical call into humility and obedience that is part of being broken by God is not easy for me. Obedience must be built upon humility, and I am not a very humble person. I remember having a dream years ago and in the dream God showed me a clock. The numbers on the clock represented degrees of pride, with one representing a small amount of pride and 12 representing a large amount of pride. In the dream, God asked me to rate my pride. I pushed the hand of the clock to somewhere around 4 or 5 and then looked at Him with hope that I was right. Unfortunately, I wasn't—God gently corrected me by pushing the hand further and further around the clock.

For days after the dream, I remember being aware in a new way of all of the various forms and degrees of pride in my life. Pride keeps us from the brokenness that is necessary for our living Eucharistic lives. Priesthood has provided me with many opportunities to enter into humility and obedience, whether in big ways, like being asked by the bishop to transfer to another parish, or in smaller ways, like needing to work sometimes on my day off.

SHARED

I have found that being shared is intimately connected with being broken. Without humility and obedience, we are unwilling to be shared with others. Often, when God asks me to share myself with others, I respond like the first son in the parable of the two sons.

A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, "Son, go out and work in the vineyard today." He said in reply, "I will not," but afterwards he changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, "Yes, sir," but did not go.

-Matthew 21:28-30

Sometimes, when the Lord wants to share me with others, I grumble and complain. Yet, I find that, right now in my priesthood, I usually do what He asks me. I know that He is inviting me to a deeper place where I will both humbly say, "Yes" as well as follow thru in obedient to what He has asked of me.

I encourage all of you to take some time this evening or tomorrow and reflect on these four action of Eucharistic faith—taken, blessed, broken, and shared. How have they been lived out in your vocation? Which is the easiest? Which is the hardest? Which one does Christ seem the most present in right now in your life?

"Imitate the mystery you celebrate..."