



Lenten

Reflection Series

One Church, Many Voices

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Second Sunday of Lent - February 28

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Although vaguely uncomfortable with all the noise, my experience with a cacophony of voices is extensive – in a school hallway, before a controversial vicariate meeting, in a dangerously unmuted Zoom meeting, and in anxious milling about at innumerable public events (notably those right before being seated for dinner).

Banquet halls and large ballrooms are, after all, noisy places, filled with layered voices, music, motion. They are also spaces of anticipation (“Take your seats, please!”), inequity (“Why is that other table getting a second cup of coffee? We are dying here.”), uneven quality of courses (“The rolls at least were good.”), and music either in the background or toe-tapping. If the Church is a shadow of the heavenly banquet, I am attuned to the irony of the metaphor: In our parish, will it be perfect prime rib or rubber chicken? Melted ice cream or a chocolate buffet? A glorious orchestra or a croaking soloist? The disparities in the culture of the banquets in our faith communities leaves me breathless. Round tables are best, of course, and congenial dinner companions sensitive to speaking with all at the table and attuned to passing what we need are a treat; a parish that truly feeds us fills a void we may not even know we have.

Finding my voice at the banquet table usually means some careful listening (left ear is best because of the years of hard-rock dance chaperoning) and then a touch of silence. The silence at the banquet is, of course, when everyone starts eating. It is the main course, the Bread of Life, which finally gifts me with the space to find my own heart. And that Bread fed me through youthful faith certainties, searing existential doubt, moments of joy and fear, and then back again to simple and ordinary daily bread of the “spiritual communion.”

When we can once again find ourselves around tables together, I have decisions to make. Breaking the bread that matters, sharing wine and conversation, I can choose to savor the varied voices around me...and listen more deeply, I hope. I am also going to pray for the grace – I am not quite there – to reach out in invitation to break bread more widely. I have been so blessed to share meals with those I love in a tight circle this year. God, give me the courage to invite to the table those who have hurt me – and whom I have hurt – to share a meal. I need to listen to their voices and feed on You.

Personal Reflection Questions

Lent is a time of self-examination and renewal. Consider using the reflection prompts below to help further your contemplation and open your mind and heart during the 40-day journey of Lent.

- **When students would complain about the Masses at their parish, I told the teenagers to “Go where you are fed.” Where have you found your Bread for the journey?**
- **What roles do listening and silence have in finding your own voice?**
- **What ways will you find to share the “Banquet” with those who have hurt you and those whom you have hurt?**