

**Good Friday Homily**  
**Good Friday: Feed Me This Day**  
**Nat Cooke, 4/22/2011**

Oh, feed me this day, Holy Spirit, with  
the fragrance of the fields and the  
freshness of the oceans which you have  
made, and help me to hear and to hold in all dearness  
those exacting and wonderful words of our Lord Christ Jesus, saying, *Follow me.*

That is one of my favorite poems by Mary Oliver.

Peter Faass came up to me at the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper and asked if I would do the Good Friday Homily this year. After a couple of stupid remarks on my part, I agreed. Later that evening, while washing more dishes than I had ever seen in my life, I started to ask myself why did he ask me, why did I agree and what, in the Lord's name (to coin a phrase) did I have to say?

I never did answer the first question but realized that I did have something I wanted to say and that's why I agreed.

I believe that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried. Those that know me will recognize that that statement is almost, but not quite, the only thing that I agree with in the Nicene Creed. That may not seem like very much to you, but it took me a long time to get there.

How did I get there?

Nancy and I did not go to church on a regular basis until about fifteen years ago, when we came to Christ Church, and that was not because of a desire to find God. No, we did it to be with Tom and his family and as soon as we became regulars, they left town. What to do? We stayed.

During Nancy Roosevelt's tenure, Nancy Cooke and I started reading new and different writings. At first, it was Marcus Borg, then Barbara Brown Taylor. It continued after Nancy Roosevelt, with Borg and Crossan, Spong, Ehrman, The Jesus Seminar and a wonderful DVD course entitled the Philosophy of Religion, taught by James Hall. (This last was a discussion as to whether or not there is a loving, omnipotent, God. I am convinced that there is a loving God but am left with the question as to whether or not he is omnipotent.)

Then came Jim Cooney, who taught us (Nancy and me) how to think about our religion. It was during his stay that he and Deon developed a new Affirmation of Faith. In this affirmation they presented, at least me, with a new thought. I will quote only that portion of that affirmation. "We believe in Jesus of Nazareth who is Lord, Christ and Redeemer, who wants not to be idealized, but to be followed." Who wants not to be idealized, but to be followed.

Then came Peter. Peter is a wise, wonderful, and patient person who puts up with me as his favorite contrarian. He is also a wonderful teacher.

I quote from Taylor's "[God in Pain: Teaching Sermons on Suffering.](#)"

"...what if...God has settled for limited power in order to be in partnership with us and we really can mess things up? What if God lets us? This is a different world. In one, everything that happens, happens by the will of an all-powerful God. In this one, God's power is limited by our power to resist. What happens in a world of clashing wills, so that even God is sometimes surprised?

This casts a different light on the cross. It is entirely possible that God's will for Jesus was long life and success, and that his early death was not the fulfillment of God's will but the frustration of it--the world's no to God's yes--a divine defeat. In this light, Jesus did not die to pay our bills. He died because he would not stop being who he was and who he was, was very upsetting. He turned everything upside down. He allied himself with the wrong people and insulted the right ones. He disobeyed the law. He challenged the authorities, who warned him to stop. The government officials warned him to stop. The religious leaders warned him to stop. And when he would not stop, they had him killed, because he would not stop being who he was.

At any point along the way, he could have avoided the cross. He could have stopped operating in the open and gone underground instead. He could have stopped being such an activist and started writing books instead. He could have stopped helping other people and helped himself instead.

He could have stopped being who he was, but he did not."

End quote.

And this is the person I want to follow? Yes!

Recently, Arab nations around the Mediterranean have risen up and demanded some of the same things; such as justice, for which Jesus gave his life, and some of these uprisings have been relatively non-violent occurrences. Jesus' people did not have Facebook or Twitter, and probably not the will nor the strength to accomplish what some have accomplished here. It is not Jesus whom the Arabs are following but their goals in many ways are the same. And many have given their lives.

The real question is, how do we follow Jesus? We aren't there to help him carry his cross up the hill. There are so many things which we could do, and I don't have the time or the knowledge to list them here. Maybe one or two, specifically for me. I must learn to love my neighbor and to be more generous to those less fortunate than I.

I will leave you with this thought however, a passage from Thessalonians.

***1 Thessalonians 5.12-25***

*Be at peace among yourselves;*

*admonish the idlers;*

*encourage the faint hearted;*

*help the weak;*

*be patient with all of them.*

*See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all.*

*Rejoice always;  
pray without ceasing;  
give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.  
Do not quench the Spirit;  
do not despise the words of the prophets, but test everything;  
hold fast to what is good;  
abstain from every form of evil.  
May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit, soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**Amen.**