

Holy Thursday reflection: Dinner among Friends

Fr. James Smith | Apr. 9, 2009



A Holy Thursday reflection

Tonight we have been invited to an intimate dinner among a few friends. But these men did not begin as friends. Jesus was not a celebrity looking for fans, or a politician on the hustings. Jesus was a teacher looking for students, disciples. They didn't have to be bright ? just teachable.

So, he first chose Peter: rock-solid in his own way after he had been quarried. Loyal as a dog, dependable in crisis. He was the kind of leader that others could lean on. Jesus could count on Peter to get the job done whether it was easy or hard, whether he felt like it or not, whether he understood it or not.

On the other end of the spectrum was John. More a lover than a man of action. Someone to sit around with, talk with, pray with, be with. Not very useful otherwise. But then, what good is a new kingdom if there is no love there? John would keep recalling the others to the whole point of their message and mission.

We don't know anything about Andrew except that he was the brother of Peter. Maybe, after Jesus told Peter to follow him, Andrew might have said: "What about me?" And maybe Jesus said, "Why not?" Sometimes in life, things are just that simple.

The other brace of brothers was James and John. They were not much into reasoning, more into emotions. They would not be the ones to plan the campaign strategy. When one village rejected them, the brothers wanted to destroy it! But if the others got lazy, the brothers would wake them up.

Thomas seemed the least likely of the group. He appeared to question everything that happened. Even after God proved Jesus was right by raising him from the dead, Thomas had to feel the wounds.

But just because of this very defect of doubt, Thomas might have been the most effective preacher. Because the audience was even more skeptical. "A crucified carpenter, you say? Rose from the dead, you say? Starting some kind of new kingdom, you say? Hmm." But Thomas had already worked his way through those doubts.

Convinced preachers might scare people off, but people recognized Thomas as one of their own. If Thomas could believe it, so could they.

Every group needs a treasurer. Luke seems to imply that that was Judas' downfall. But it's hard to believe that he would sell a friend for a paltry \$30. Maybe Judas just disagreed with the method of Jesus, and thought that a forced confrontation with the authorities might alert Jesus to the fierceness of their opposition. Perhaps he never thought that they would kill his friend. Things just go wrong sometimes. We never know when our ambiguous actions will take on a life of their own and lead us where we had not planned to go.

But that is just a sad footnote to tonight's story. This is Jesus' last night on earth, and this is how he wanted to spend it. Not in solitude, not in personal communion with his Father, not with his old friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus. He wanted to spend his last night with his working buddies: that hot-and-cold, off-and-on bunch who nevertheless stuck with him to the bitter end. They had simply hung around him long enough that their admiration and respect and camaraderie worked itself into friendship. It happens.

And here we are, invited among that select circle of friends. We hear the same conversation. we eat and drink the same bread and wine ? and we try to rekindle that old spark of intimacy that we used to feel. It can happen.

*Fr. James Smith is pastor of St. Matthias Church in Columbus, Ohio. This homily appeared in the April 2009 issue of Celebration, the worship and homiletic resource of the National Catholic Reporter. For a free copy of Celebration, go to **CelebrationPublications**.*

Support independent reporting on important issues.



Source URL (retrieved on 07/27/2017 - 09:49): <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/holy-thursday-reflection-dinner-among-friends>

Links:

[1] <https://www.ncronline.org/donate?clickSource=article-end>