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Sovereign over even the darkest corners

by Melissa Musick Nussbaum

My Table Is Spread



He's retired now, our bishop emeritus, but for over 20 years,

Richard Hanifen presided at midnight Mass at the cathedral. As Christmas Eve moved into Christmas Day, Hanifen would stand to greet us.

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," he said. And then, smiling, "I bring you greetings from your brothers and sisters in the El Paso County jail."

Before he came to celebrate with us -- our skin itchy from new wool and unclipped tag fasteners, our exhausted, velveteen-clad children asleep in the pew -- Hanifen, bishop of Colorado Springs, Colo., went to the jail to celebrate Mass with the inmates.

We knew this was his practice, but the words still startled. What news, what glad tidings have they to share with us? How am I brother or sister to the meth dealer and the murderer?

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