

Devotion: 1st Week of Advent – November 30, 2005

Romans 15: 7-13

The Fabric of our Lives....

I thought I'd like to speak to you this evening about the wondrous marvels to be gleaned from a tablecloth. Not usually an exciting topic for an evening to discuss one's laundry, but once you stop to realize where it has been... if only it could talk!

I want to share with you my grandmother's linen tablecloth... a little worn and repaired over time, but woven with such treasured memories... While washing and ironing the cloth a few weeks ago, I noticed a very minute soiled area on the cloth and fell into reminiscing. I know we all do this with a treasured memory from childhood.

My Mom's recollections of her Mom's tablecloth. A gift to her on her wedding day, one representation of a celebration of a new life together! As I was never fortunate to have met her, this was Mom's way of passing along our family heritage. The stories at times seemed endless but I can remember her explanations vividly. The small soiled area, just about here, a representation of a baptism of one of their 12 children.... and their subsequent marriages....and more baptisms! And even calls to eternal life with the Lord. The cloth has seen many generations and is truly the fabric of my life.. tangible proof of the peace, love, joys and tears... all shared within a family. Upon it sat floral arrangements in celebration of events; coffee and cakes for the guests were served upon it as well.

Then I got to thinking as I ironed the cloth of how similar it was to each and every one of us. I realized we are God's fabric. God's gift. We are all brought into this world

as the finest linens and velvets and satins. Would you ever set the table with linen and sackcloth? Our Lord does! He blends all of His fabrics into a fine blend. Here we are, as you can see, seated among each other. I'd even go so far as to say our family of faith is a "crazy quilt"...singly and unsupported we are weak, but once together and bound, a significant force to be reckoned with! How do we maintain the very fabric with which He has endowed us? Even upon us there is always an indication of our spots...our sins... a blemish... a ZIT! We are not very different from the cloth I hold in my hands.

Thinking further, I thought, Good Lord what must I have done now to cause this ZIT to appear? Had I offended someone today... had I not loved my neighbor as myself? Had I not tried to follow in the Lord's way? All of this...and more! Some of the blemishes are visible; many lie deep beneath our skin... sins hidden from the society in which we live

Just how deep into the fibers are they hidden?

How do we set about in removing the many stains accumulated over the years?

How do we restore this fabric as God would have us do?

First of all, we have to determine from what cloth we are made. Has the fabric of our lives been reduced to sackcloth? Are we chintz or denim? Are we made of the finest linens and laces...what indeed have we become? The truth....we are whatever the fabric He has chosen for us, but because of our neglect we are broken. How do we now go about refreshing and repairing the broken fibers? How do we set about renewing that with which we have been endowed? Do you think "a little dab'll do ya" is sufficient? OR... I'll get back to that at another time? It takes an act of courage to take the scraps life provides and to wrestle chaos into order and turning it into something useful and

beautiful, into its true value known only to the heart of God. It is always possible to transform the fabric of your life even amidst all obstacles placed before you..

How blessed we are here at Holy Trinity to know the difference! We are blessed in our family of faith with pastors who lovingly tend their sheep and continually remind us we have but to hear! They provide us with the means of His Grace and His abundant love, and, good or bad, they never fail to remind us to seek and ye shall find....to them I submit appreciation and gratitude.

Our Lord sees deeper than the superficial appearances we present to each other. He digs deeply into those very fibers. He has the ultimate cleaner of them all! One problem: you can't find it bottled on the shelves at the local supermarket.

God sees our blemishes and washes them clean in his forgiveness. WE are His fabric, made of whole cloth, renewed constantly with his forgiving grace. He blesses us in our births and baptisms... he blesses us in our marriages and celebrations of life in Him. Most of all He is there woven into the fabric of our very lives as we follow Psalm 23, into His Kingdom. With His steadfast love His promises are forever.

I truly believe He has preserved this tablecloth for me....so I might one day recall it has been preserved to remind me He is there and part of my daily life. What fabric do you think he has chosen for you? My fabric is not diminished, though I have neglected it. It needs only the continual refreshment only God has secured for me with his cleansing love. Personally, I think I'm a notch above sackcloth... I have so far to go to be acceptable in His eyes... to be the finest linen as I can be.

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