

Wonderings for Sunday, August 18th, 2024

Proverbs 9:1-6

*Wisdom has built her house,
she has hewn her seven pillars.
She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine,
she has also set her table.
She has sent out her servant-girls, she calls
from the highest places in the town,
“You that are simple, turn in here!”
To those without sense she says,
“Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
Lay aside immaturity, and live,
and walk in the way of insight.”*

John 6:51

Jesus said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

These are two of the four lectionary readings for this Sunday. I was struck by Diana Butler Bass’s reflection on these texts. She talked about the desire for wisdom and the need for living bread, suggesting that both bread and wine are essential elements of life as is wisdom.



Diana notes that while bread and wine are liturgical elements for both Jews and Christians, they are also “ancient staple foods, the basics of many human diets over centuries.” She explores the process that must happen for bread and wine to be – they each undergo fermentation – a long slow process of being transformed into living elements. Bread and wine both need time to

become the offerings that grace our table. They are truly living elements that sustain us – the bread and the wine.

She notes too that wisdom is this long slow process. I share her words; “Wisdom is like that, too. How does one pursue wisdom? Where do you find it? Perhaps it is like bread and wine. It begins as something else — an experience, a loss, suffering, bad choices. But when some leaven — like the Spirit — is introduced, these original ingredients are transformed into wisdom through a process of fermentation that takes time. Wisdom

cannot be rushed. You learn, you craft, you wait. Eventually, what was becomes something else — something lasting and satisfying.”¹

Wisdom is more than knowledge, wisdom is wisdom. A living energy that animates us. The inner maturity that comes with life. Desired for the wholeness in life. Like grace, like the living bread, wisdom transcends and transforms us from one state to another.

This week I've been reading Richard Rohr's reflections on Julian of Norwich. Julian of Norwich was a

*medieval mystic from England who lived in the early 14th Century. She is perhaps best known for her words of assurance “**And all will be well**”, “**all manner of things shall be well.**”* It is the closing words to her manuscript titled Revelations of Divine Love, her wisdom offering following her encounter with Christ while deathly ill. An encounter that revealed to her God's great love for the world. She first wrote a short text about her showings and then patiently wrote Revelations of Divine Love, taking twenty years in contemplation and prayer, trusting in God to help her discern a deeper understanding of her vision. ²

In both Butler's reflections and Julian's writing time was of the essence. Time to transform the bread and wine and time that allowed Julian to fully comprehend her vision.

In our present time which seems both urgent and indifferent to our needs, may we find ways to embrace wisdom that brings insight. I am not suggesting that we should embrace all that has happened as an opportunity to grow in wisdom. That would be insensitive to our suffering which is real and heartbreaking and rather pollyanna. But these two readings and our text for this week speak to me of the hope that is found in faith. Hope that is revealed in time. Hope discovered in the wisdom of words that Julian of Norwich shared in a time when her world was in much chaos and trial and tribulations. Hope that is offered in the bread and the wine that offers life.

Julian of Norwich trusted Wisdom to feed her soul. And now, through her words, we too can be nourished by this living wisdom.

Bread is alive; wine is alive. Christ is alive.

*“Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
Lay aside immaturity, and live,
and walk in the way of insight.”*

“And all will be well”, “all manner of things shall be well.”

Reflection by Rev. Linda McLaren, inspired by words of Richard Rohr and Diana Butler Bass and the words of our living Text.

¹ Diana Butler Bass Sunday Musings accessed @ <https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/sunday-musings>

² Richard Rohr accessed at <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/a-showing-of-love/>