

Thursday of the Third Week of Advent

In Chapter 14 of the Gospel of John, John has Jesus say, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God, believe, also, in me. In my father’s house, there are many dwelling places, if there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?”

I like the idea of “dwelling places” and I like the idea of “hearts not being troubled.” I think that the idea of resurrection, depends on love and not logic, that resurrection is a baffling idea for our minds but an easier handle for our hearts.

Resurrection I do not believe is an end of life issue exclusively, it is the mystery of communion that joins hearts all along the way gathering love into those baskets that carried the excess “loaves and fishes.”

Learning to lead with our love rather than our minds is not easy as our love gets tangled in our feelings a lot of the time and our feelings, as normal and natural and varied as they are, do not get us to the truth of our lives.

Our feelings often pose and posture as the truth of our lives, but the truth of our lives is deeper than what we might be feeling at any given moment.

Please, know that I am not at all suggesting that we ignore or hate or try to get above our feelings, on the contrary, I am suggesting that we go deep into our feelings.

Making people suspicious of their feelings has been the source of much suffering brought upon lots of people by the Church in terribly misguided efforts to encourage holiness by giving stand-alone moral weight to feelings.

The idea of guilt is a tool that works in all kinds of settings but when it is used to teach about Christ or God, it is usually based in the hurts of the one laying guilt on other’s shoulders and serving purposes removed far from God’s love.

Discouraging healthy pride in our accomplishments or encouraging fear of religious figures with displays of power abuse or denying the joy and pleasure of human relationships and attractions and desires is a feature of a lot of

religious education and faith formation and it really serves neither religion or faith, I do not think.

There are those, many among the clergy, who feel that their ministry should be one of correction.

I have heard of parishes where it is routinely announced prior to the distribution of Holy Communion that if you are not in a "state of grace" for the salvation of your own souls, do not receive Holy Communion but just approach and bow your heads for a blessing.

I cannot help but wonder at what feelings of theirs gives rise to such behaviors, so contrary to what we see and hear of Jesus, who looked upon people not with eyes of judgment but with compassion, encouragement, and love, even those who did not like and even hated him.

I think that we need to love our feelings and try to get to know what in fact gives rise to particular feelings and one way of doing that is to just try and sit without feelings, a few minutes, but regularly, can give us the freedom to be more gentle with ourselves so that we can be more gentle with others.

We will fail and fail often but, please, keep trying because you are more than your feelings, much more.