Do this in memory of me
John 20:19-23

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When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." [John 20:19-23 NRSV]

This morning, we gather, once again, at the Lord's table. We hear again Jesus' words of promise: "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry; whoever believes in me will never thirst." [John 6:34] And we hear Jesus' invitation: "This is my body that is for you. Do this, remembering me." [1 Cor 11:24]

What does it mean for us to share in this holy meal, "in memory of Jesus"?

What do we remember, as we come to the table?

- We recall moments of communion with Jesus, moments when the Lord has met us in our need and in our longing, and we could say, **"Were not our hearts burning as we talked with Jesus on the road?"** [Luke 24:32].

- We remember those who have shaped us by the testimony of their lives. We remember the saintly men and women who have nurtured us by word and example.

- We recall our baptism, our dying and rising with Christ. We recall the day when we stood before God's people and declared: "I turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as my Savior; I turn from all sinful desires that draw me from the love of God."

- We come to the Lord's table remembering our brokenness, our need, and our failures in love. We come in our hunger and thirst, our desire to know more deeply the fullness of life that Jesus promises.

- And we recall Jesus' ministry, his sacrifice, his suffering, and his saving work for us. We remember a "love so amazing, so divine".

There is so much that we recall, memories that are intimate and deep. But there is yet more that we are invited to recall as we come to the table. We do not come in isolation, holding our private

memories alone. We are called to be a *body* that remembers, a *community* that "cannot forget the suffering of others" [McCormick, 140]. As Patrick McCormick suggests: "we remember the scandalous suffering and nonviolent love of our God, a God who takes on our frail and broken flesh, … a God who walks defenselessly into the heart of human violence and conquers this violence with love." [McCormick, 140] We are invited at the table to recommit ourselves to the way of the cross. We are called to a deep communion, through Jesus, with those who are vulnerable or rejected. We remember those who Jesus identified with: the ones who suffer, the ones who are violated, those who are disregarded in this world.

What will it mean for us to be a "body that remembers"?

- It is Christ, the Reconciler, who invites us to the table. It is Christ, who is our peace, who offers us his very life. The One who says to us, "This is my body, this is my blood", also says: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." [John 20:21] We are called to embrace the mission of Jesus, given by the Father. We remember our vocation as bearers of peace, seekers of peace. We are sent into the world to console, to reconcile, to forgive, to break down walls of separation and hatred. "Do this," Jesus says, "remembering me." "Remember your vocation, as children of peace."

- To remember Jesus is also to remember that "our brothers and sisters have complaints against us." [McCormick, 141] We are reminded that *we* stand in need of forgiveness. As we remember Jesus' sacrifice for us, we recall, too, our complicity. We aren't innocent bystanders. At the foot of the cross our own violence and sinfulness are exposed. We remember Jesus' words: "So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there … and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister." [Matthew 5: 23-24] Jesus stands in solidarity with the "sinned against"; that is the testimony of the cross. And that is our calling, too—standing with those who we have offended, standing with those who suffer on account of our indifference or privilege. As Alan and Eleanor Kreider and Paulus Widjaja write in *A Culture of Peace*: "Jesus is not only present with us, the sinners. He is also primarily present with those whom we have sinned against. We will find Jesus before and amidst the victims of our sin. So when we take the bread and wine in communion, we are actually reminded of those people whose bodies are broken and whose blood is shed because of our sin. It is to them that we should come in humility and ask for forgiveness" [116].

- At the Lord's table, we remember our mission, our vocation. We remember our need of forgiveness. We remember those we have offended or excluded. Here, too, we are "re-membered", re-united, as the body of Christ, joined to Christ and bound to each other. To live "in memory" of Jesus involves claiming our unity, our oneness, the truth that we are intimately bound to one another.

  How are we invited to become who we say we are, and express the fundamental unity of the body? How are we to "remember" the body, in ways that declare our oneness and announce that there is no longer a dividing wall of hostility? As we gather at the table, we are reminded that we rely on the kindess and the gifts and the labor and witness of our

> brothers and sisters here. But not only these sisters and brothers. Consider how intricately we are bound to others: others harvest our food, provide for our security, nurse us in our illness, labor through the night on our behalf, advise us in all manner of things. Too easily we forget. We deny our bondedness. We isolate ourselves from others. We are blinded by our fears. We discount and devalue others, and accommodate ourselves to oppression. What will it mean for us to "remember" the body? What will it mean for us to remember those who bear Christ's wounds in the world?

Hear these words of invitation, from one of the liturgies of the Iona Community:

"Here… through bread and wine,
We renew our journey with Jesus and his disciples.

Here, through bread and wine,
We renew our unity with one another,
And with all those who have gone before us in this place.

Through bread and wine,
We renew our communion with the earth
And our interwovenness with the broken ones of the world." [Iona Community, 87]

We gather at the table remembering the saints who have gone before us. We remember our solidarity with believers in every place. We remember those who are abandoned and forsaken. We remember those who cry out for justice. We remember those whose lives have been torn apart by violence.

How are you called to the way of the peace? How are you called to love with the heart of Jesus? How are you called to stand with those who have been rejected, or violated? How are you called to "live in memory of Jesus"?

The Lord's Supper is a feast of solidarity,. Here at the table, we remember Christ's sacrifice, we remember how far Love has gone to seek us and free us and reconcile us. Here at this table, we are invited, once again, to be a community that remembers … that remembers our Lord, that remembers his suffering, and that remembers those who bear his wounds in the world. Here at this table, we are being united, "remembered" to the One who is our peace, the One who breaks down walls, the One who meets us even when our doors and our hearts are "locked for fear" and says, "Peace be with you". As the Father has sent me, now I send you."

Works Cited

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