



breadfortheworld
HAVE FAITH. END HUNGER.

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time: August 7, 2011
Rev. Donald DiXon Williams

RCL: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28; Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b; Romans 10:5-15;
Matthew 14:22-33
LM: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a; Psalm 85:9, 10, 11-12, 13-14; Romans 9:1-5;
Matthew 14:22-33

Today's reading from Genesis brings up some strong emotions and memories I have not visited in quite some time. These verses made me reflect on some special people, special places, and a special purpose.

Joseph's story has great appeal to me on many levels. Joseph's big mouth, Isaac's favoritism, and his brothers' envy combine to set the stage for the revelation of God's ultimate purpose for their lives. In verses omitted from today's reading, it's clear that Joseph is the dreamer who does not mind telling his brothers about his dreams. Needless to say, his dreams do nothing to endear him to his brothers, because he is always the hero and they always come off looking subservient. Their hatred also stems from their knowing that their father loves Joseph more than he loves them. Sometimes before your dreams can come true and God finally and fully reveals God's purpose, you may just have to live through a nightmare. As the story unfolds, we see Joseph a captive of his own flesh and blood, put into a pit, sold into slavery, and taken to Egypt. Isn't it ironic, with all the joyous banquets in Scripture to which God invites us, that here the brothers sit down to eat in the midst of their brutal treatment of their younger brother.

Let me tell you how this story comes to life for me. In 1993 I went to Goree Island, off the coast of the West African country Senegal. In past centuries Goree was a center for the expanding European slave trade. Estimates are that well over 20 million Africans passed through the island. As I walked the paths on the island, I could feel the presence of those who went through the "Door of No Return." I found a rock that overlooked the island, sat down, and began to think about what it must have been like to be captured by your own people and put into the pit of slave dungeons and slave ships. What did they feel as they endured the "Middle Passage," then were sold as property into slavery, while their brothers and sisters were dispersed to South America, the Caribbean, and North America? As I sat there, tears came to my eyes, and I could feel my connection with Africa fill those empty places and penetrate the very viscera of my soul.



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It is more than interesting to me the role that economics, money, greed, and hunger played in the enslavement both of Joseph and of those souls that were stolen away in the transatlantic slave trade. It is also inconceivable to me that at the dawn of the twenty-first century, slavery is still an issue in the Sudan and in other parts of the world. It seems that economics, money, greed, and hunger are still at the root of our own inhumanity to one another.

Children's Time

Written by Larry Hollar

This would be a classic time to speak with children about rivalries within families – that they exist and that most of the time we're able to cope with them by outgrowing them or working them out by talking to other family members about our feelings and needs. Obviously the Joseph story is a hard one, because today's reading ends without the more comforting resolution of next week's reconciliation. But either week offers a chance to acknowledge that tensions among brothers and sisters are often part of family life and to reject the violent, alienating responses of Joseph's brothers. Also be aware that part of what got Joseph in trouble was being seen as a tattletale, which children might wonder about.

Musical Suggestions

I've Been 'Buked – AAH 386

Oh, Lord Have Mercy – AAH 448

Your Heart, O God, Is Grieved – ELW 602

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