

Thanksgiving

As some of you know, my 23 year old daughter is very proud of, and identifies very closely with, her Polynesian heritage.

And so she has taken her Magna cum laude degree in Ethnic Studies to head NOT to law school, but to work on a farm in Makaha, and our garden in Kalihi, to help youngsters reconnect with the most fundamental part of their culture: the land.

Which is a remarkable and beautiful place to devote her time, treasure and talent.

And I am very proud of her!

However, when days like Columbus Day and Thanksgiving roll around, I usually get an earful about all of the atrocities that white men like me have caused to native people down through the centuries.

Looking at history from the underside, from the point of view of the vulnerable, it's something that is, in truth, long overdue.

And yet, imagine my daughter's surprise when we discovered through our family genealogy that one of our direct ancestors on my Mom's side arrived in Massachusetts on the boat that arrived right after the Mayflower.

Meaning - that my nativist daughter has the blood of white conquerors running through her veins.

Which causes her considerable consternation.

I share this with you because what is really at stake on days like this one is to give us all a chance to pause for a bit.

To remember that no matter how we may identify ourselves, we are, when all is said and done, related to one another.

No matter our color or ethnicity or language or race.

Truth be told, everyone's blood runs through all of our veins.

Which isn't an excuse to ignore the horrors inflicted on our indigenous siblings.

Indeed, that recognition ought to serve as a call to action to make restitution.

To make recompense.

To right, insofar as possible, past wrongs.

Because these wrongs were not inflicted on strangers or "heathens" or some other "less than human" category that for centuries justified all kinds of barbarity.

These wrongs were inflicted upon our very family members.

That we are all connected really came home to me after spending some time in Kenya, the very birthplace of the human race.

Africa is our common homeland, and Adam and Eve, were, undoubtedly black.

And yet, how ironic that black people, the race most subject to animosity and ridicule, the singular group marked by widespread slavery, the one racial group that even Hawaii has yet to truly welcome, these people are our grandmothers and grandfathers.

Today, our connections to one another are especially important to remember.

In the face of increased tribalism and partisanship, with seeming non-stop efforts to divide and frighten people, we truly do need to pause; and reflect on all that joins us together.

On all that unites us.

Getting to that place begins with what we heard in this morning's lesson from Deuteronomy.

That simple lesson about being in "right relation" with God.

In recognizing, and being grateful for the fact, that we don't own the world — God does.

That we don't cause life to exist - God does.

And when we can accept those truths, and be grateful for them, suddenly, how we see each other, how we see ourselves, comes into focus.

So that we can once again remember that all of humanity is related.

That all of humanity is connected.

And all of humanity is necessary.

Isn't that the meaning of Jesus being the bread of life?

That what truly fills us is when we follow in the footsteps of the gentle master who feeds the hungry, clothes the naked and visits the stranger.

That eating **this** bread puts us into the flow of life — a life of service, sacrifice and solidarity with one another.

I'll leave you with this.

In the first chapter of Genesis, God is consumed with creating.

And so, God creates "every kind" of bird and "every kind" of animal and "every kind" of fruit bearing tree.

By the time God gets to humanity, we expect to hear that God creates "every kind" of humanity too.

But God doesn't do that.

Because there are no "kinds" of humanity.

God creates humanity that is only one kind: a humanity made in the image and likeness of God.

For this we have Thanksgiving.

May yours be blessed.

+amen

