

THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL PROVIDE FOR ALL PEOPLES A FEAST OF RICH FOOD AND CHOICE WINES.

IN THE COMING WEEKS WE WILL BE HEARING ABOUT THE NEW ROMAN MISSAL TRANSLATION. THE WORD OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH POINT TO THE REALITY OF THE EUCHARIST. AS THE PROPHET ATTEMPTS TO ENCOURAGE GOD'S PEOPLE TO RETURN FROM THEIR EXILE IN BABYLON, HE POINTS TO THE REALITY THAT THE GOD OF ISRAEL IS REALLY THE GOD OF THE NATIONS. THROUGH ISAIAH, GOD SAYS TO CYRUS, THE PERSIAN EMPEROR: "IT IS I WHO ARM YOU, THOUGH YOU DO NOT KNOW ME, SO THAT ALL MAY KNOW, FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN TO ITS SETTING, THAT THERE IS NONE BESIDES ME. I AM THE LORD, THERE IS NO OTHER." GOD, WHO LOVED HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE ENOUGH TO PUNISH THEM, NOW USES A PAGAN RULER TO SET THEM FREE FROM BONDAGE. GOD WHO SENT HIS SON JESUS AS SAVIOR IS A GOD OF CONTRASTS AND EXTREMES AS HE SETS A FEAST BEFORE US. WITHOUT DOUBT CHRISTIANITY IS THE ULTIMATE EXTREMIST RELIGION. NO OTHER RELIGION, NO OTHER FAITH, NO OTHER DEITY EVEN COMES CLOSE. CONSIDER THE EXTREMES OF CHRIST HIMSELF. HE IS THE LAMB OF GOD; YET HE IS THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH. HE IS THE PRINCE OF PEACE; YET HE IS THE MAN OF WAR. A BRUISED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK; YET HE SHATTERS THE NATIONS WITH A ROD OF IRON. JESUS WEEPS; YET HE HAS EYES OF FIRE. HE DOES NOT LIFT UP HIS VOICE; YET OUT OF HIS MOUTH GOES A TWO EDGED SWORD. CHRIST IS THE SAVIOR AND THE JUDGE AS WELL. HE MADE HIMSELF A SERVANT; YET HE IS THE MASTER AND LORD OF ALL. HIS KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD; YET HE IS KING OF KINGS AND ALL KINGS WILL BOW AT HIS FEET. HE WORE A CROWN OF THORNS; HE OFFERS TO US A CROWN OF LIFE. HOW EXTREME THE MANDATES AND THE FRUIT OF CHRISTIANITY ARE IN OUR LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS. CHRIST PROMISED TO LEAVE HIS PEACE WITH US; YET HE DECLARED HE DID NOT COME TO BRING PEACE, BUT A SWORD. CHRIST BRINGS UNITY TO GENTILE AND JEW; HE DIVIDES A MOTHER-IN-LAW FROM HER DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

HE COMMANDS US TO REJOICE EVERMORE; HE TELLS US TO LET OUR JOY BE TURNED TO SORROW AND OUR LAUGHTER TO WEEPING. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MEN AND NATIONS ARE EQUALLY EXTREME.

HE WILL SAVE THE CITY FOR THE SAKE OF 10 RIGHTEOUS MEN; HE DESTROYS TENS OF THOUSANDS FOR THE SIN OF ONE MAN. ONE ERRANT SON LOSES PARADISE BY ONE ACT; ONE OBEDIENT SON REDEEMS THE WORLD BY ONE ACT. GOD FORGIVES THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY; HE KILLS THE MAN FOR STEADYING THE ARK OF THE COVENANT WITH HIS HAND. HE SENDS BLISTERING DROUGHT IN ELIJAH'S DAY; HE DROWNS THE WORLD IN NOAH'S. HE BROUGHT THE FIRST SON OF DAVID AND BATHSHEBA TO THE GRAVE; HE BROUGHT THEIR NEXT SON TO THE THRONE. THE ANGELS REJOICE WHEN SINNERS ARE CONVERTED; CONVERTED SINNERS WILL JUDGE THE ANGELS. THE EXTREMES OF CHRISTIANITY MAY STARTLE US; THEY MAY MAKE SOME COMFORTABLE; BUT THEY ARE NOT CONTRADICTIONS. THE TIGHTROPE WALKER THAT BALANCES HIS ACTS WITH A LONG POLE HOLDS BUT ONE POLE. IT IS THE EXTREMES OF THAT POLE THAT KEEP THEM IN BALANCE. SHOULD HE FAVOR ONE SIDE OF THE POLE AND LOP OFF THE OTHER, HE COULD NOT MAINTAIN HIS BALANCE. WE, TOO, STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND MYSTERY. THERE IS NO ADEQUATE EXPLANATION OF THE EUCHARIST FOR THE SAME REASON THAT, IN THE END, THERE IS NO ADEQUATE EXPLANATION FOR LOVE. CERTAIN REALITIES TAKE US BEYOND LANGUAGE BECAUSE THAT IS THEIR VERY PURPOSE. THEY DO WHAT WORDS CANNOT DO. THEY ALSO ARE BEYOND WHAT WE CAN NEATLY NAIL DOWN IN OUR UNDERSTANDING. AND THAT IS TRUE OF THE EUCHARIST. ANY ATTEMPT TO NAIL DOWN ITS FULL MEANING WILL FOREVER COME UP SHORT BECAUSE IT WILL ALWAYS EVENTUALLY GET UP AND WALK AWAY WITH THE NAIL! AS WE STRIVE TO UNDERSTAND THE EUCHARIST MORE FULLY, WE ARE GUIDED BY THE ANCIENT WORDS OF ISAIAH: *THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL PROVIDE FOR ALL PEOPLES A FEAST OF RICH FOOD AND CHOICE WINES.*