

*“What God has made clean, you must not call profane” Acts 10:15b*

The late Dr. Gerhard Forde, who taught at Luther Seminary in St. Paul would say now and then “part of the message of the incarnation is that if being human is worth God’s time, maybe we should give it a try.” That is, the center of our Christian faith does not draw us out of the world, but invites us to take the world both more seriously and more joyfully.

Cornelius, a Roman soldier was a part of an imperial force that prided itself on imperiously forcing itself on whomever it wished. We can assume he was trained to be part of an army that simply enforced its will on others with no need to enter or understand their reality. That is the tradition of Rome. He encountered something different in the tradition of Jerusalem. He learned of a God who took vital interest in the lives of the People. God elected, journeyed with, sustained and blessed people in their daily lives and situation.

Something about the piety, not the pietism of the People spoke to him and gave him a sense of human community and worth that superseded what he had learned as a Roman. He was generous to people and conscious of the God who is present.

Peter had been raised in that tradition. When Jesus called him to be a disciple, Peter knew he was entering fully into the heart of the faith that had sustained him up to that point. He knew his own weakness and the grace of God that transcends his weakness. He knew that he had denied his Lord but was still called to ‘feed my sheep’ by that same Lord, now risen from the dead. He knew the struggle of being human, the persecution always a part of the lives of the faithful.

Now Peter also is beginning to learn that God will not let ritual or regulation get in the way of love. This celestial tail-gate opens Peter to the newness always a part of the tradition of Jerusalem. The One who entered human life calls us to enjoy creation as a good gift of God. The One who is genuinely human call us to share creation as gift to each other. We are made clean by God and moved from profane to humane.

*Gracious God, help me to see all your gifts to me in the grace of Word and Sacrament and in the bounty of a shared creation. Open me to hear your word of blessing and then open my life to share that blessing. I ask this in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

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