



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

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**Rose Sunday in Lent
March 15, 2015**

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

The passage selected for our meditation today is from the Epistle:

“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondsmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he that was born of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he that was born of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory, for these are the two covenants.”

Galations IV: 22-25

As we can see from the Altar, this Sunday in Lent is very different. There are flowers on the Altar, the Celebrant is wearing his Rose chasuble. In many Anglican parishes they serve seminal cakes, which are blessed at the beginning of Mass, and are full of raisins, sugar and sweet goodies that we usually avoid during Lent. It's a Sunday that is rich in symbolism, and symbolism is the language of allegory, which is the point of Paul's commentary on motherhood in the Epistle.

This is Rose Sunday, which is also known as Mothering Sunday. It is appropriate that we think about Motherhood today, both materially and spiritually. Our language is full of terms that reflect our admiration for mothering. We reverence Mother Earth, we honor our Motherland, we rejoice when we hit the mother lode, and when we are hurt, or lonely or unhappy, we reach out for our Mothers. We claim that we live in a man's world, with male privilege, but the first word our children learn is "mama". The toughest athlete turns to the camera on Sunday afternoon and says "Hi, Mom".

When St Paul writes about the allegory of the slave and free born mothers, we have to understand it at two levels. Historically, we leave the Covenant of the Jewish people, who are formed in blood relationship, and we enter into the New Covenant, which is made in the Blood of Jesus Christ. His blood become our life, our identity and our inheritance. Spiritually, which is especially important in Lent, we leave the bondage to sin. Our inheritance of our pride and selfishness is death. Our new, spiritual mother is the Church. Just as Jesus gave His Mother to the Beloved Apostle John to keep at the foot of the Cross, He gives us to His Bride, the one Holy and Catholic Church. It is through the Church that we are fed with His Body and Blood, partaking in the Communion of love between Jesus and His Father by the grace of Holy Ghost.

In the Gospel account this morning, Jesus gives His Apostles, and all of us a preview, an instruction, about how his Bride, the Church, will nourish and protect her children. The account is familiar. Jesus has been teaching, showing the signs and miracles that have been prophesied to identify the Messiah. He pauses to rest at this mountain, and as He looks up, He sees the multitude following Him, being gathered unto Him. He tests the faith of His Apostles, asking them how they will feed the multitude. When they despair of feeding the crowd using their earthly resources, Jesus opens their eyes and hearts to His grace. He instructs the Apostles by multiplying physical bread to feed this crowd the way that the Jews who followed Moses were fed with Heavenly Manna. This miracle previews the way in which Jesus will multiply simple bread to be our spiritual nourishment as we journey through the

wilderness of this life in our journey to the Promised Land, which is Heaven.

This morning, I want to meditate on what Jesus saw when he lifted up His eyes to see the crowd that had followed Him to the mountain. At the historic level, they followed Jesus believing He would deliver them from slavery to the Romans. Even His Apostles shared that understanding. As Abraham journeyed from Ur, and Moses led the people from Egypt, Jesus represents the fulfillment of the old Covenant, delivery from the bondage of Hagar to the inheritance of Sarah.

Physically, Jesus saw in that crowd a people who would follow Him without regard for their earthly concerns. They walked into the wilderness with a childlike naivety. They didn't pack provisions, they didn't make reservations, they just followed Jesus away from their homes, their lives, the comforts of their enslavement. That phrase sounds odd, doesn't it? But odd as it sounds, it is true. Slavery was comfortable. In exchange for identity and inheritance, the people got a measure of safety, regular meals, jobs undisrupted, a place in which they could live, as long as they were satisfied with a shadow of the promises made to them by God. This group walked away from comfort of their slavery, and followed Jesus, trusting that Messiah would provide, and they were not disappointed. Jesus looked upon their necessity, and had compassion on them. He knew they would not make the full journey with Him unless He offered them sustenance, something to strengthen their bodies and their resolve. In exchange for the gift of their innocent trust, Jesus fed them, and fed them to overflowing, giving them more than they had even imagined to ask.

More than that, Jesus looked to their spiritual well being. He used this occasion to teach His Apostles that it would be their job to step out in faith and grace and to feed His sheep, the multitude that would follow Him in the New Covenant. He showed them that they should be fearless, and charitable, being willing to give even the least of their resources, secure that by the grace of the Holy

Ghost, what seems meager in our eyes is abundant in the light of truth.

Jesus also taught those same Apostles on Holy Thursday that they would have to look to the spiritual nurturing of this flock. He showed them that the same bread which could be multiplied, could also be transformed into not only nourishment, but life, and life eternal. These people who followed Jesus out of slavery and into the wilderness, would be adopted into His family, and through His bride, the Apostolic Church, they would be fed with his very life so that they could be sustained on the journey to eternal love and life.

Which leads to the point of today's lessons. What will Jesus see when he looks up from His Holy Throne this Rose Sunday in Lent? Will he see in us the childlike faith and courage that empowers us to follow Him into the wilderness and to the hope of His Covenant. Will he see us hopeful that we will be fed not only in this life but that we have hope to be partakers in the banquet of His eternal Life in the Eucharist. Will he see in us a willingness to leave the comfortable life of slavery to sin. Can we separate ourselves from tiny dreams, from our pointless pride, from the selfishness that causes us to spend our lives accumulating material goods and glory, always hungering because what we gather rusts, corrupts withers and leaves us hungry. Will Jesus see in us a people who can give up sin, despair and death for Lent and forever?

And will Jesus also see in us the legacy He gave to His Apostles when He made them His Bride, the Church. Will he see as us cheerful givers. Will he see us courageous and faithful when it seems our resources are inadequate. Will he see in us the faithful stewards of His children, feeding them with what they need to survive this journey, both in physical need and spiritual nourishment, so that all those He gives us can be raised into the fullness of His Covenant, His inheritance and His eternal life and love.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen