

HOLY THURSDAY - 2010  
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We called her "The Queen of Bingo." My grandmother, Marie Woods, did not simply *play* bingo... she *lived* bingo! On Monday night, she played at St. Aloysius parish. On Tuesday night she was at St. Joseph's. Wednesday night she was at the local fire station, and on Thursday she was at the American Legion Hall.

My grandmother *lived* bingo. For instance, on Monday evenings bingo started at 7:30 PM at St. Aloysius. But my grandmother arrived at 4:30 PM! She would park her car, get her 'lucky seat' along the aisle, and set up all her good luck charms (these included a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, a rosary, pictures of her grandchildren, and photo of President Kennedy!). After she got herself set up at her lucky seat, she joined the Slovak ladies in the kitchen, eating delicious homemade food, and occasionally drinking a Schmidt's beer!

My grandmother's bingo playing came to an end in the early 1980's, when my grandfather had a series of strokes which left him paralyzed on his right side. He could not walk, He could not speak. He could no longer swallow, so they inserted a feeding tube into his stomach. The doctors told my grandmother that she should place grandpop in a nursing home, but she would not hear of it. "I'll take care of him at home," she declared. And that's what she did.

So, they set up a hospital bed in the front room of the house, positioned so that my grandfather could still watch the old Zenith TV. Nanny Woods learned all that she needed to learn in order to take care of him. She learned how to wash him, how to change the sheets while he was still in the bed, how to feed him through the tube in his stomach. It was not easy, but they managed.

At that time, I was a student in a local college, and I occasionally stopped by their house as I drove home. We usually had great visits.

But there was one day when things were not 'great.' I walked through the front door of their house, which opened directly into the room where my

grandfather's bed was located. As soon as I walked in, I could see that something had gone wrong. There was my grandmother, standing over my grandpop, trying her best to clean up the liquid food that *should* have gone into the tube. She was crying. He was crying. Something had gone wrong when my grandmother tried to feed grandpop, and the liquid food was everywhere.

Instinctively, I began to back out of the door to give them privacy. But at that moment, my grandmother turned to me and she said, "Don't you dare!"

I didn't know what she meant, but I froze!

She said it again: "Don't you dare. Don't you dare leave." And then she said, "Because, sometimes, love looks like this."

"Sometimes, love looks like this....."

My grandmother died this past December. As I prepared to preach at her funeral, I kept returning to that moment in that room, where she and my grandfather taught me one of the most important lessons about love that I have ever learned.

It is such a crucial lesson, because, frankly, I like love! But I want love to be...nice. I want love to look good, to feel good, to be good.

And, sometimes, it is. Sometimes love looks like a young couple, standing before the altar on their wedding day, vowing to love and honor each other for the rest of their lives. Sometimes love looks like a parent, who has just been handed their newborn child for the first time. Sometimes love looks like the college sophomore, who has, for the first time, fallen head over heels, drool and giggle in love.

Sometimes love looks like Spiderman, hanging upside down and kissing Mary Jane. Sometimes love looks like a grandparent smiling from ear to ear as their granddaughter sings in the school show. Sometimes love looks like Leo DiCaprio, strapped to the front of the Titanic, screaming, "I'm the king of the world!"

But, then there are times when love looks like a woman in her 60's, tearfully trying to clean up the liquid food that has spilled on her paralyzed husband.

Sometimes love looks like a worn-out mom, who is sitting up at 3:00 AM, rubbing the back of her sick infant who cannot sleep without mom's comforting presence. Sometimes love looks like parents, sitting up on the couch at 1:37 AM. Their daughter was supposed to be home at midnight. They don't know where she is.

Sometimes love looks like a student, who has just finished writing two papers, and all you want to do is go to bed, but someone just called you and told you that they really need to talk...so you drag your tired body over to their room, and you listen.

My grandparents taught me a most important lesson about what love looks like, in that room, years ago.

Jesus taught all of us **THE MOST IMPORTANT** lesson about what love looks like, in that upper room, years ago.

Remember the context – Judas has already made up his mind to betray Jesus. This is the last time that Jesus will sit at table with those whom he loved. The Cross looms over the entire meal. The departure of Judas guarantees the arrival of the soldiers. In just a few hours, the hands of Jesus - which hold pieces of bread and cups of wine - will be pierced with the cruel nails of crucifixion.

So, what does love look like when you've been betrayed? What does love look like when you know that you're going to die? What does love look like when your whole life's work seems to be unraveling, and the people you've been so good to seem to be letting you down, and the world you came to save seems to be rejecting everything about you?

What does love look like when you are losing, everything?

Paul tells us that love looks like Jesus, taking bread and wine into his hands, and saying to people of every era, "take this – this is my body – given for you – take this –drink it – this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood." What does love look like? It looks like Jesus's willingness to remain with us, even when we often have an instinct to flee. It look like Jesus, willing to nourish even the deepest hungers of the world. It looks like Jesus, willing to give us the great sacrament of the Eucharist, because he knew that we would

always need him. HE KNEW that we would always need him – even though we often FORGET how much we need him.

What does love look like on the night before he died? It looks like Jesus, stripping off his cloak, kneeling on the floor, and washing the feet of his disciples. It looks like the master, doing the work that only servants do. It looks like the God of the Universe, willing to serve weak human beings; the Creator washing the feet of creatures. Love looks like the willingness to stoop down low enough to do the simplest, dirtiest, nastiest thing, because that is what needs to be done.

What does love look like? It looks like Jesus being patient with Peter, who does not understand. It looks like Jesus, telling the truth. It looks like service. “As I have done for you, you should also do.”

Wait a minute... did you hear that last line? After showing us what HIS love looks like, Jesus throws down the Christian gauntlet that has echoed down over 20 centuries of Christian experience. “I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, so you must also do.”

The Last Supper is not just a thrilling tableau of what love looked like in the life of a nice Jewish rabbi from 2000 years ago. The Last Supper is the mission statement, job description, and guiding principle of everyone who dares to call themselves a Christian. So this Holy Thursday Gospel is not just a nice piece of history – it is an invitation to the mystery of your own life. And, if you let it, this Gospel asks the most compelling question that can be asked – “what does love look like in YOUR life?” What COULD love look like, if you let Christ teach you? What SHOULD love look like, if you let Christ challenge you?

What could love look like in your life? Could it look like patience, forgiveness, truth-telling? Could it look like your decisions to become more generous, more available, more honest? Could love look like deeper prayer, a gentle tongue, an expansive heart?

What could love look like in your life? Could it look like chastity? Or integrity? Or fidelity?

In the life of Jesus, love looks like a willingness to feed the hungers of the human heart through the Eucharist. So, what could love look like in your

life? Could it look like YOU feeding the hungry, or helping the poor, or visiting the sick? Could it look like your work for justice, your defense of human life, your decision to live more simply, so that others may simply live?

In the life of Jesus, love looks like a willingness to stoop down low enough to serve. So what is love going to look like in your life? Could it look like a decision to follow a very different career path? Or a decision to volunteer? Or a decision to go to seminary? Could it look like the daily tasks of parenting, or spousing, or friending? Could it look like paying attention to the responsibilities placed in your hands? Could it look like transcending yourself so that your life reflects the conviction that life is not about you, but about the God who made you?

Pay attention over the next three days. The story of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus is the greatest love story ever told. Pay attention – the Gospels will show you what love DID look like, and what it CAN look like in your life.

Always, always, always, love looks like Jesus.

Sometimes, sometimes, love looks like us.

And in this liturgy, love looks like feet that are washed, and bread and wine that are placed upon a table.

May the Lord be praised now and forever.