

A Sermon preached by the Rev. Richard G. P. Kukowski at Grace Church, Silver Spring on September 6, 2020; it being the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 18A)
Text: Exodus 12: 1-14

When we sit down in front of the television it doesn't take long before we see start seeing the commercials and hear Burger King telling us to "Have it Your Way." Or, perhaps it is Wendy's saying, "It's way better than fast food." McDonald's says, "I'm Lovin' It," and don't forget Kentucky Fried Chicken because they are, "Finger lickin' Good." And, if we head out for something resembling Mexican Food there is Taco Bell, "Thinking Outside the Bun."

We love fast food in American society. The list of fast food restaurants is a much longer list than the ones I just mentioned. We not only like our fast food, but we really like it fast, on the go, and ready to eat right now. And in these pandemic times, we can run by the drive thru and eat behind the wheel of our car. I know, because I do that every morning on my way here to Grace. And, I am so consistent – or maybe non-creative – in what I order that I only have to begin to say my order and the person at the drive thru that I frequent every morning fill in the rest before I say it!

Perhaps that is the reason we like our fast food so much. As a society, Americans tend to always be in a hurry. We are always rushing around to get somewhere. We all know it takes food to fuel our bodies so we can continue on with this journey we call life. So, in our rushed lifestyles we want to drive by and grab a bag full of fuel because we need to eat

We are not the first to do this kind of thing. In our first reading for this morning, the Israelites were instructed to hurriedly eat the first Passover. Unlike our fast food today, Passover was fast food, not because of the speed to get the meal, but because the people were to be ready to move. They were to eat it in a hurry. It wasn't intended to fill them forever, but to give them strength for the journey.

The Israelites were to eat this meal fully clothed and ready to depart Egypt and slavery at a moment's notice. Even today, the whole point of the Seder or Passover meal is to remind Jews of the trials of enslavement past generations experienced. They eat the meal to fuel a spiritual journey and to remember.

In days gone by, when people traveled, they wore special traveling clothes. I am really not sure why. Today we tend to wear whatever is in our closets. There is nothing in my wardrobe I would classify as "traveling clothes." I have dress clothes, work clothes, casual clothes, bum around clothes, summer clothes and winter clothes. When I am going to travel, I select something from one of those categories. I own nothing having the name traveling clothes.

But not so many years ago, people wore traveling clothes. When I was in graduate school at Catholic University in the late 1960's, I had traveling clothes. If I was to fly back to Minnesota to see my family for the holidays, I very carefully dressed

in a dark suit, white shirt and tie – that was part of the flying experience is those days. And, I must admit, in pre-Covid 19 days, when I have been flying recently, I kind of wish that we had traveling clothes. All too often, I have seen more of the human body – male and female – then I really care to; especially if they were seated next to me in economy class.

So, the Hebrew people were to eat the Passover meal, ready to make a journey. They were to eat the meal dressed in their traveling clothes and with their shoes on their feet, ready to leave Egypt. Such was a really unusual instruction back in the days of Hebrew slavery. For any of us, this idea may not sound so strange but that is because we are used to wearing shoes almost all the time. Well, most of us wear shoes all the time. When we go to a restaurant we wear shoes. Who among us hasn't seen the sign, "No shoes, No shirt, No service?" When we go to someone's home for a meal, even many of us in our own homes, always have shoes on our feet.

But, in the Biblical era such was not the case. Because everyone wore sandals feet and their primary mode of transportation was to walk virtually everywhere they went, people's feet grew tired. In addition, they were dusty and dirty. When you entered someone's home the first thing you did was to remove your sandals and your feet were washed. Such was the commonly accepted practice of the day. Remember how Jesus complained to Simon the Pharisee when he was invited to dinner at Simon's house, "You gave me no water to wash my feet when I entered your house..."

The meal itself, now known as the Seder meal, or Passover meal was a sign of the old life of slavery the Israelites had lived and were leaving behind and also of the new life to which God was leading them in the Promised Land. Everything in the meal had deep symbolic meaning. The bitter herbs, the roasted lamb, even the wearing of traveling clothes and sandals on their feet were all of symbolic importance. The Israelites were to eat the meal prepared to follow on the journey at a moment's notice. The Passover meal was a fast food meal. It was a meal that was intended to quickly give the Hebrew people fuel. It was fast food to give them strength for the long, hard journey ahead.

For Christians today the Holy Eucharist or Holy Communion is our fast food. Like the Passover Seder for the Israelites, Holy Communion isn't designed to fill us forever, but instead to strengthen us on our spiritual journey. We get that fast food, quick fuel as the Lord's pilgrim people. Holy Communion is the fast food for our Christian journey. And that is why we came to church every Sunday to "fuel up", if you will, for the living of our ministries and our faith out in the world over the coming week.

Beginning next week, we will return to celebrating Holy Eucharist at this service. We have been doing Morning Prayer for the last few months because the clergy felt strange getting to receive when no one else could. None of us thought that this pandemic would go on for so long.

However, after a lot of prayer, study and with the Bishop's permission, we are able to provide the consecrated Sacrament to everyone so that at Communion time in the service, if you choose to do so, we can all receive together even though we are apart. Some of you have picked up the Sacrament this past Saturday and there will be another opportunity this Wednesday from 5 to 7 pm here in the parking lot.

When I read today's Hebrew Scripture lesson, the image of fast food came to mind – the Israelites were ready for the journey that was about to happen. When I thought about how we are to distribute the Sacrament to all of you, the image of fast food came to mind, the drive thru's we are all familiar with. I would have never envisioned these two images coming together, but the pandemic has changed our world in almost unfathomable ways and for the foreseeable future. The “new normal” will probably never be the “old normal.”

My hope and the hope of the clergy and staff of Grace Church is that together we can “eat the Body and drink the Blood” and be strengthened for whatever God has in store for us.

It is also significant that our first celebration of Eucharist in this manner will be on Ministry Sunday – the day when we come together to celebrate and commit to the many ministries for, of and in this parish.

Join us next Sunday to be nourished by God's food for us – by Jesus giving himself for us, so that we might bring him to this world that so desperately needs him. Amen.