

The Divine Comedy:

Notes from Pastor Darryl

November 2019

My parents aren't the most outwardly religious people in the world. They are not the type to wear their faith on their sleeves.

My parents instead have what I would call a more ... hmmm ... experiential way of demonstrating their faith. They are more "doers" than mere hearers or speakers of the word. Small gestures of kindness and love directed at individuals are more their style.

One of the best examples of my parent's faith expression is in the time-honored Christian tradition of radical hospitality. Growing up, my house used to be full of people on Thanksgiving and Christmas. My parents were always so good to invite people over for dinner, pie, coffee, hot-totties, good conversation, and of course, THE DALLAS COWBOY football game!

Both my parents were always so good at expanding the table to include just one more. There was an open invitation to anyone who did not have a place to be on any given holiday and desired to have one. Then, my mom and dad would do this "thing" that would seem antithetical to hospitality, but in fact would make the persons feel more included: they would put that person to work helping with the holiday preparations. The guests weren't pampered, they were given chores like setting the table or stirring the gravy. This made the person feel truly integrating in the life of the festivities.

Bottom line: my parents are skilled hospitality people. Jesus, I think, would approve.

As the holiday season rolls ever closer to us (ready or not, here they come!), I thought I'd take this opportunity to honor my parents and how they live out

their faith and suggest some ideas of how we can express our faith – maybe in more understated - incredibly powerful ways this holiday season:

1. Practice Christian hospitality by **inviting someone(s) from the congregation or community to your Thanksgiving or Christmas table.** Add a seat or two around your table, break bread, serve pie (with whipped cream) with someone who might otherwise be alone, and who is not choosing to be alone. Involve these guests when they arrive in the festivities, don't just make them an honored "guest." Don't simply host a person, but build community and friendship with them. And let us not wait too long to extend that invite. The earlier the better.
2. Giving back is always an important part of our faith expression. Set aside sometime to serve on Thanksgiving or Christmas. One way to do that is to participate in the making of the lunches for those living on the streets on Thanksgiving morning here at KCC. There are multiple ways you can do that:

You can supply some of the food, or funds for food, for the lunches or you can come to KCC on Thanksgiving morning and actively create the lunch boxes or you can help pass them out. **Caring for the "least of these" is at the heart of our Christian faith. When did we see Christ hungry and feed him? When did we see him thirsty and give him water?**
3. **Be mindful that the holiday season can be very difficult, emotionally and spiritually, for some people who have experienced loss, are removed or distanced from family or friends, are struggling financially, are having familial relationship challenges, or are "blue" for any myriad of other reasons.** The season isn't always joyful for all.

The best words to share with a person struggling through the season are, **"I am here for you," and "we'll get thru this tough time together."**

This level of awareness and kindness goes a long way to helping people who might otherwise feel eschew and disjointed, if not downright

miserable, during the holiday season. The most joyful part of the season might be your expression of kindness and understanding.

And please know that I am always available to talk with you if you ever need an ear, a shoulder, a sounding board, or a hug – during the holidays or otherwise.

My parent's faith in God and Christ has always had an understated quality to it. They don't quote scripture much, and even might not pray a grace before each meal. But their expressions of love and kindness, particularly thru practicing radical hospitality on the holidays, always felt very authentic to me. And it is an ethos I have tried to apply to my own ministry and life.

As we try to have a Happy Holidays, isn't authentic and loving what we're really all hoping and praying for?

Peace. Love. Understanding.

Pastor Darryl