

Thanksgiving Day

Cycle C

November 28, 2013 10am
Saint Margaret Parish, Bel Air

Eskimo Hands

My thoughts this morning center on the Eskimos of Alaska.

Some of the primitive Eskimo artists had an interesting practice. When these artists were creating human figures out of wood, they would often carve large holes in the hands.

Many of the figures that they carved were hunters. The pierced hands of the hunter signified that part of the game that they caught was allowed to fall through their hands to the rest of creation.

Hunters, like all other Eskimos, were to share a portion of the gifts that came to them. And linked with this, the pierced hands also expressed the high value of hospitality in Eskimo culture.

Our Pierced Hands?

On Thanksgiving Day, I am thinking that this feature of the Eskimo art has something to say to us.

Whenever we share our home or food with a guest, we are allowing part of the good things that have come to us to be passed on to others. The root reason for this is that all that comes to us in life is a gift.

Sometimes this can be hard for us to understand because we know that we have worked hard for what we have. But, if we drill down deep enough into the truth of it, all that we have is a gift from God.

Today is a day when it is important to look at all of the good things we have and then to examine our generosity. We need to ask whether we really have Eskimo hands – pierced hands that allow some of what we have to flow through to others.

A Test of Pierced Hands

For example, do we look upon our natural gifts, our education, our intelligence, and our success simply as personal possessions? If we do, then we might close our fists tightly and cling to what we have.

But if we see them as gifts given by a generous and loving God, then we might naturally pray for one more gift. This is the gift of pierced hands, Eskimo hands.

And, by the way, at the basis of the Eskimos' pierced hands was the belief that all of life is an interdependent web. They believed that nothing or no one is totally independent of others.

The hunter and the hunted, humans and animals were all part of an interdependent network of life. That sense of community was also the basis of the pierced hands.

Christ's Pierced Hands

When we stop to think about it, we Christians are very familiar with pierced hands.

Jesus on the cross has his hands pierced with nails. The risen Christ appears with pierced hands.

Maybe we should look at these not only as nail holes, but as generosity holes. At the Last Supper, Jesus gave himself to us.

Jesus gave not just part of his talents and gifts. He gave his entire self.

This gift of himself brings us salvation – it is a saving gift. In a similar way, when we let allow part of any gift we have to fall through the holes in our hands, that gift is saving to others, to those we know and in some way, to all the earth.

And so, when we come to receive Communion today, we receive the Giver of all gifts. When we open our hands so that the minister can place the Body of Christ on them, let's be aware of our hands.

Do they have holes in them, like the pierced hands of Christ? If not, let's allow the One whom we receive to touch our hearts and give us pierced, Eskimo hands.

Readings: Colossians 3.12-17
Mark 5.18-20