

"GUESTS AT THE SUPPER"

INTRODUCTION In just a little while, you and I will share in the most cherished tradition of the Christian Church - the observance of the Lord's Supper. And because we come from a great many different traditions, we bring a variety of emotions and understandings to this event. I would like to attempt to gather up some of those understandings and try to focus them for us in the next few minutes.

Whatever our background, all of us know that this is a time of deep spiritual intimacy. Because the service makes use of food, it becomes for all of us a very personal experience. We are not just telling a story about a man who gathered His friends for a supper, but in eating and drinking and remembering that event, we experience Christ in the most interior realm of our very being. We feel strengthened and warmed by this gift of the symbols of His life.

FOR MOST OF US For most of us, this service will be a time of remembering and of heightening our awareness of Jesus Christ and what He means to us. In these small elements of bread and wine we are reminded again of our Lord's love poured out for us. That love comes to us from Him with no conditions and no demands, and occasionally it overwhelms us with the fact of its acceptance and indiscriminate loving.

Because of that acceptance, in this service we are enabled to take out the broken pieces of our lives, and instead of being ashamed and hiding them away again, we can bring them to the Great Healer to help put them together again.

THE REMINDER OF A SUPPER This service of Holy Communion is a reminder of the supper which Jesus shared with His inner group of Disciples in an Upper Room just before He went to His death. The story of it was read in our Scripture lesson; we're familiar with it. It's the culmination of a whole series of events that led up to it.

Let me sketch the background for you.

Jesus and the disciples had been travelling south from their home territory in Galilee toward the Holy City of Jerusalem where they would celebrate the Passover. They were part of a great throng of pilgrims who were making the same trip. As they went along, Jesus began to give His disciples warnings that things were coming to a head and that they were traveling into danger and perhaps even death. He talked with them about His potential suffering, about the great danger for all of them, and of His ultimate, if not immediate triumph.

But such talk was too much for the disciples to cope with. What they heard was that their hopes were about to be fulfilled. Their Master was going to Jerusalem where He would stand revealed as the long awaited Messiah and come into His Kingship and rule. So when Jesus spoke to them of a cross, about betrayal and death, they could not help but hear instead their own inner dreams of power and prestige and position. They were denying in their own way all that they did not want to hear.

Out of this context they came together for a supper. In a ritual setting, Jesus chose to re-enact the Passover Story and write a new chapter for it. He takes them down the familiar path as they recall the Exodus from Egypt, the land of their slavery and persecution. He reminds them of their deliverance and

and the beginning of their new relationship as the people of The Promise. But then, in typical fashion, He takes them where they had not imagined He would go. He asks them to see Him as a new kind of Deliverer. It is not physical deliverance in this case, but a freedom from the bondage of all that would keep them from God. He promises to lift His friends above the guilt and shame of their denials and their betrayals and bring them into a world - a new world - of forgiveness, of joy, of love, of wholeness.

They will understand that His love is total and unconditional, He tells them, because He is willing to lay down His life for them without coercion or bitterness or asking anything in return. This unconditional love, He explains, is how God loves all of us and it is what God hopes we will in turn act out with one another. The disciples are challenged to drink of the cup Jesus gives them and to journey with Him to the cross.

LOOK AT THAT GUEST LIST To me, it is staggering to think that He would say all this to the group there in front of Him. Look at the guest list for that dinner.

On the one hand He could see Judas, whom He already sensed was in the process of betraying Him with the authorities. And then there was Peter, who in a short time, despite all his protestations, would be denying that he ever knew Jesus and turning away from Him in shame. The other disciples would sleep through their Master's agony and flee at the first opposition. Not a very impressive group. Are these people worthy to base one's ministry on? Would you give your life for any one of them?

And what makes Jesus who He is is that for Him the answer is, "Of course!" Knowing all He knows about them, Jesus none the less offers them the symbols of His poured out love, the gift of His very body and blood. And because He did this for them, we may also believe that even when we fail in faith, even when we deny and betray, even when we fumble and falter, we can receive His amazing love just as He gave it to them.

How we might wish the disciples had responded in whole-hearted acceptance of that love and response to it. But, knowing ourselves, we must be honest about what was happening in the minds of those humble men. They weren't evil, those men....they were simply turning away because they were unwilling to share our Lord's pain.

"THE NEARER TO GOD, THE MORE PAIN" Kierkegaard once wrote, "the nearer to God, the more pain". As you reflect on that thought, you may find it hard to accept. I would like to believe that being in the presence of God would be a joyful and stimulating and heavenly experience. But it isn't only that, because as we draw closer to God we become aware of all those who have a place in God's affections, and that we have a responsibility for them. And the sense of that much responsibility can be disturbing, troubling and at times - terrifying. It is a "world" family that gathers this day at His table for this meal.

And as we draw near to God we do see things about ourselves which we have not been honest about acknowledging, that we are somewhat selfish, that we are deniers - like Peter - of our commitments and loyalties, that we are betraying - like Judas - the mission which God has for us. Is there not something of Peter and Judas in each of us.

We see that we have chosen to avoid accepting responsibilities, that we have said that we honor God but we often do not honor the claims that makes on the way we live our lives. The closer we come to God the more we are aware of our own failures and fumbles. There is pain as one comes into the presence of God and don't let anybody try to tell you that it is not there.

But it is the pain of love, for wherever there is love, there is going to be some pain.

If you have ever loved someone or been loved by someone, you know that already. Allowing someone to know the truth about you is a source of considerable anxiety as well as joy. Being responsible for the well-being of someone is a responsibility as well as a pleasure. It will always hurt us to love someone else because our commitment to that person will conflict with our love of ourselves. The love that Christ gives us in the bread and the cup implies that kind of risk.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER / THE BEHAVIOR OF THE DISCIPLES

The behavior of the disciples becomes a kind of model, does it not, of what most people do when they encounter that unconditional love that comes to them and asks that they in turn behave in that way, too.

To our sorrow, we, too, fall back on betrayal and denial. We feel that the risk in that kind of loving and reaching out to others is almost too great, too risky, and we avoid and deny it - or we say we are concerned and do nothing about it and thus betray our commitment. Denial and betrayal touch our lives, too. They can be listed in different ways. You know them just as I do.

We have come here this hour on this World Communion Sunday - here to this place where Christ offers us once more an invitation to His Supper. Here we find hope and healing, health and wholeness. Forgiveness is here and the second chance. His unconditional love is offered to us knowing how little we have done or may do. He offers us His unconditional love and as we accept it, He is simply asking us to pass it along to His other guests at the table - and to share it with the hungry, the homeless, the hurting - of our city and at a table then extends around the world. "The nearer we come to God, the more pain we feel". It is a terrifying responsibility he places upon us.

PRAYER

"Teach us, Good Lord, to serve Thee as Thou deservest.
To give and not to count the cost.
To fight and not to heed the wounds.
To toil and not to seek for rest.
To labor and not to ask for any reward, save
that of knowing that we do Thy Will.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen"

MICHELE

BEFORE

"The Scripture Reading for today is taken from the
Gospel According to St. Matthew. Chapter 26. Verses 17 -
It is found on page ~~854~~ 861 in the Bible that is in the
pews."

After announcing the page number...pause for about
10 to 15 seconds...allowing people time to locate the scripture
in the Bible. People do like to follow along with the reader.

Thanks...

AFTER

endeth
"Thus the reading taken from the Holy Scripture.
May God add His blessing to the reading of His Word and to our
understanding of it.

Thanks be to God! Amen!

REMEMBER TO:

1. Go slowly...don't rush it...remember it's
The Word of God...don't read it
casually, and
2. Keep your voice up...smile...and remember
that Ada Kinney has to hear you 'way in
the back of the Church.

Take the first step.

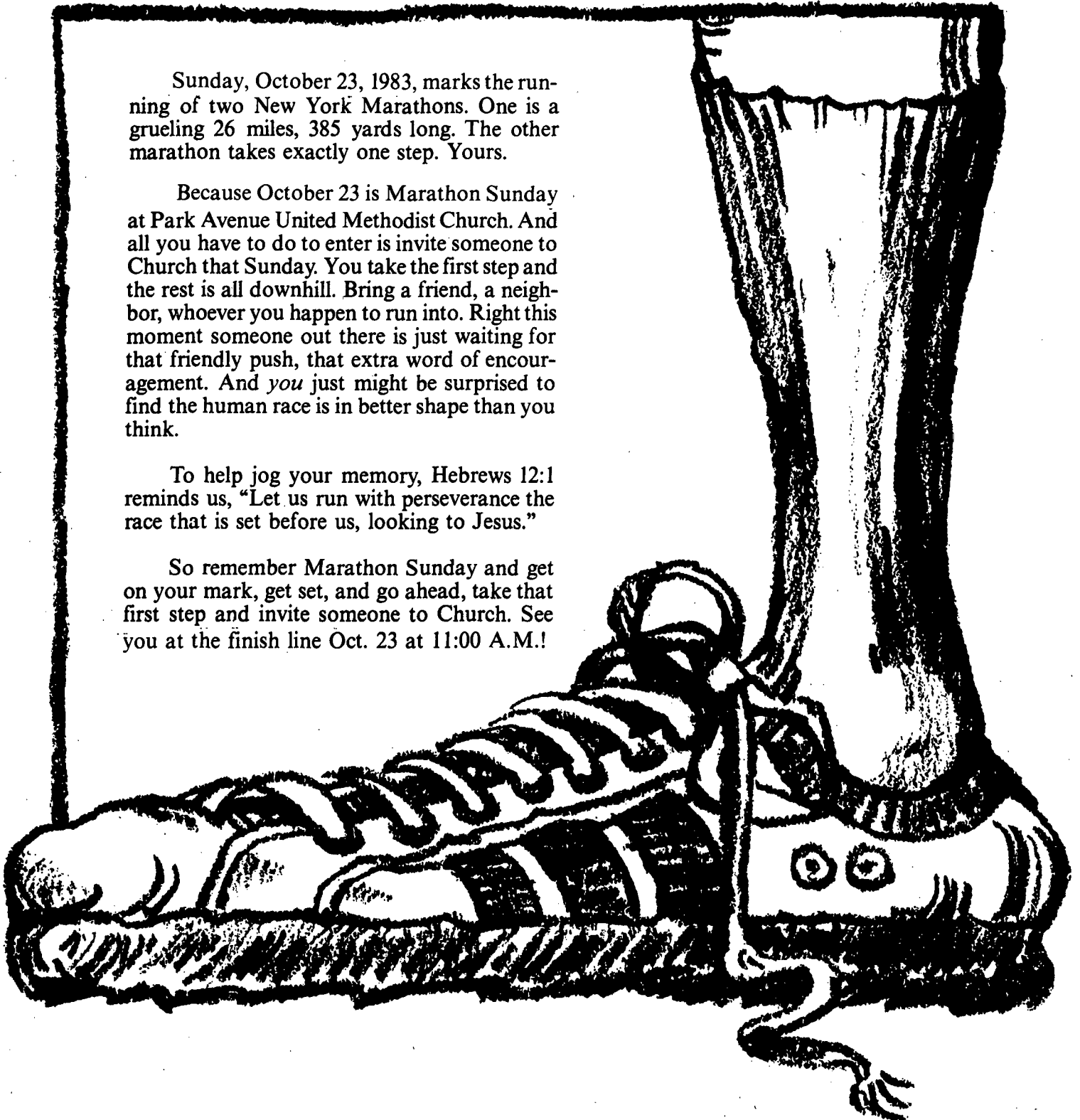
Invite someone to church on Marathon Sunday, Oct. 23

Sunday, October 23, 1983, marks the running of two New York Marathons. One is a grueling 26 miles, 385 yards long. The other marathon takes exactly one step. Yours.

Because October 23 is Marathon Sunday at Park Avenue United Methodist Church. And all you have to do to enter is invite someone to Church that Sunday. You take the first step and the rest is all downhill. Bring a friend, a neighbor, whoever you happen to run into. Right this moment someone out there is just waiting for that friendly push, that extra word of encouragement. And *you* just might be surprised to find the human race is in better shape than you think.

To help jog your memory, Hebrews 12:1 reminds us, "Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus."

So remember Marathon Sunday and get on your mark, get set, and go ahead, take that first step and invite someone to Church. See you at the finish line Oct. 23 at 11:00 A.M.!



ANTHEM: "At the Name of Jesus"

The words for the first anthem are taken from an Anglican hymn, numbered 76 in our hymn book. Several verses that are being sung are not included in our hymnal's arrangement of it. This is a new anthem and we hope you enjoy it.

ANTHEM: "O Sacred Feast"

"O Sacred Feast, wherein Christ is received, the memory of His Passion is renewed in us. Our souls are filled with grace, and the pledge of everlasting glory is given unto us. Alleluya. Alleluya."

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - comes after the Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you to remain to share in the beauty of it.

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held on Wednesdays at 6:15 pm in the downstairs Choir Room.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Christmas cards will be available again this year through the United Methodist Women. Take a moment to look over the selection during coffee hour and place an order.

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

Volunteers are needed from our Church to assist in the distribution of fundraising materials in the apartment buildings of our community for the Yorkville Emergency Alliance. Join with friends from neighboring Yorkville churches and synagogues in this major community wide fundraising appeal. Winter is coming and there's much human suffering in the shadows of our buildings.

The work gets done the weekend of October 21st - 23rd. Sign up at the coffee hour this morning and take responsibility for the building where you live. Let us know how many apartments in your building and we'll supply you with sufficient material. Through YEA "Neighbors can help neighbors".

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

If you are interested in learning more about the life of Christ and want to bridge the gap between Sunday morning and the week day in NYC, or need to find some peace and comfort in a supportive atmosphere, please join the Adult Bible Class.

The Class meets Sundays at 9:30 am in Fellowship Hall. New members are always welcome. Chapters 14, 15 and 16 of Mark's Gospel are currently being studied.

A SATURDAY RUMMAGE SALE

October 15th is the date of our Fall Rummage Sale. Workers are needed. Be in touch with Janet Ernst if you're available to help.

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

October 2, 1983

ORDER OF WORSHIP

11 A. M.

ORGAN "Rhosymedre" Vaughan Williams

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 26 "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"

APOSTLES' CREED No. 738

GLORIA PATRI No. 570

SCRIPTURE Matthew 26: 17 - 35 Page 861

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "At the Name of Jesus" Hymn No. 76

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 256 "Be Thou My Vision"

SERMON "Guests At the Supper" Mr. Clarke

PRAYER

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Anthem "O Sacred Feast" Willan

The Invitation

The General Confession

The Prayer for Pardon

The Prayer of Consecration

The Prayer of Humble Access

The Agnus Dei

The Partaking of the Elements

The Prayer of Resolution

HYMN NO. 233 "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Hyfrydol" Vaughan Williams

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Michele Arnold as our Lay Reader today. A native of New Jersey, a graduate of the University of California, Michele - formally with Ogilvy and Mather - is a working freelance Copywriter. Here in the Church she heads up the Communion Committee, helps at the coffee hour and handles the Sunday Nursery volunteer's list for the Education Committee.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are in memory of dear departed ones by Agnes and Olivia Olsson.

USHERS

The ushers today are Len Williams, Frank Bishop, Edward Brown, William Murray, Ralph Nebelung, Kenneth Pew, Jonathan Wheeler and Charles Wire.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in the Russell Room following the service. Members and friends are invited to share in these moments of warmth made possible for us today by Anna Delson, Janice Clements, Jaya Melwani, Karen Oldham, Janet Solow and Charles Wire.

SUNDAY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday mornings from eleven to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor.

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY OFFERING

A special offering will be received today for the Fellowship of Suffering and Service. Envelopes are in pews for this traditional World Communion appeal.

PARK AVENUE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

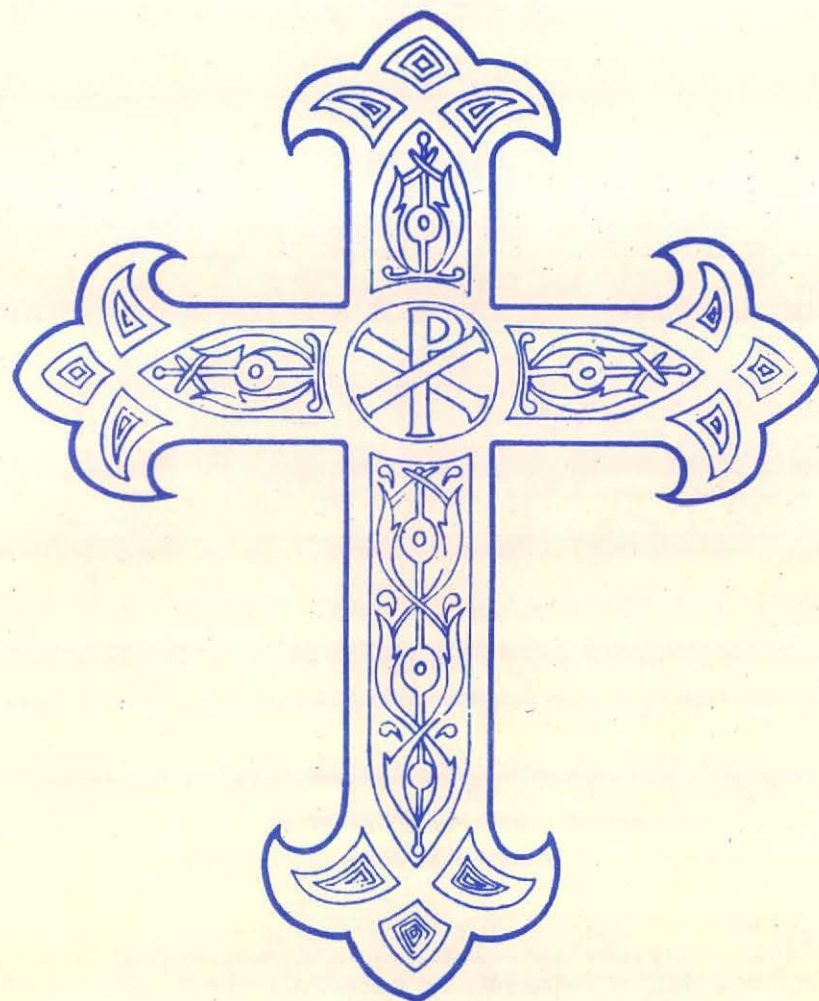
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