

A Short Teaching on Pasture and Couch
by Deacon Gerry Palermo

Greetings on the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

Readings: ZEP 2:3; 3:12-13; PS 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10; 1 COR 1:26-31; MT 5:1-12A

When was the last time a loved one put their ear to your chest to listen to your heart beat? It is a cooperative experience. The one receiving must remain still so the one who adores can position his/her ear to just the right place nestling into the breast then stillness and quiet. You can't talk or move about, you just let them listen to hear the heartbeat of you, the beloved!

In a study on the topic Dr. Marco Thiel, a physicist, explains with a mother and baby in the womb that "Our findings reveal that synchronization between the heartbeat of a mother and fetus does actually occur -- but only when the mother is breathing in a rhythmical fashion. The fetus can sense the rhythmical shift in the mother's heartbeat and adapts its own heartbeat accordingly."

From the gospel of John, the apostle John is known to have put his head close to the breast of Jesus. From the prophets Zephaniah, Isaiah and Jeremiah we hear of this closeness using the synonymous language of couching or to lie down side by side. Pasture and couch.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them about pasture and couch. No doubt John's head was near the breast of Jesus that day.

Pasture is the exterior part of the relationship being a place of healing & nourishment and movement & journey. Couch is the interior part of the relationship. Intimacy between lovers that can hear nothing else, mind nothing else, nothing else but the heart beat of the beloved.

The Beatitudes are the merging of these two characteristics into one horizon. The Beatitudes are the synchronization between the heartbeat of God and you. Blessed (Holy), nothing is blessed outside of God, are you... who synchronize your life with mine. My heartbeat, says God, is mild in spirit and mourns for the suffering. My heartbeat meekly asks for your love, hungers and thirsts for righteousness among you and with me. My heartbeat is merciful to you in error, a pure font of love and a maker of peace. Pasture and couch.

You don't need to be wise by human standards, powerful, wealthy nor noble at birth. Just put your head to the breast of Jesus... and listen to your beloved.

Peace be with you.

Deacon Gerry