

May the Word of God be Spoken; May the Word of God be Heard.

I think you know the guy I'm talking about,
the guy who says,
"Remember in Egypt, under Pharaoh,
remember when we used to sit by the fleshpots.
True, slavery wasn't so great, but those fleshpots.
I could have died right there and been happy.
It was so much better than this exodus we're on."

Fleshpot Guy.

Later in the Exodus narrative, we hear him say,
"Manna, again! Everyday, manna, manna, manna!"
Yes, free food dropping from the heavens--
I'll give you that--but it's the same every damn day.
Ah, remember the old days, the fleshpots and the melons, the cucumbers!

Fleshpot guy never really goes away.
He pops up again and again in scripture.

Jesus is dealing with Fleshpot Guy in our Gospel lesson.
"Yesterday's miracle was awesome--feeding us, all 5,000--loved it,
What great loaves! What fine fish!
So much left over too! *Do that one* again.
Don't tell us about the bread that endures forever.
Give us the bread trick again, like you did it yesterday.
None of this "I am the Bread of Life,"
We want yesterday's bread, and fishes and fleshpots too.

I've met fleshpot guy many times
in the churches I've served and attended, haven't you?

“Do you remember when...
those were the days, weren't they?
... when beloved Fr. Ashley was a real priest,
that was a man of God, wasn't he?”
... and he served such good fleshpots!”

I've met Fleshpot on vestries and altar guilds,
in parishes and missions,
in the pews and in the choir.
I've met, I'll bet you've met too,
a Father Fleshpot or two,
even a Bishop Fleshpot or two.

Since the exodus, fleshpot guy has been with us,
a constant travelling companion.

And about Fleshpot guy in American politics.
Let's leave President Fleshpot, Senator Fleshpot,
Representative, Governor and Mayor Fleshpot out of it for now.
That's too easy, too pat.
Too easy because I know I've been Fleshpot guy often enough.
Maybe you have too.

I've been saying Fleshpot guy, over and over again,
because the days gone by,
the days of fleshpots and cucumbers,
were and still are especially favorable for guys like me,
and perhaps for people like us.
This makes guys like me--people like us?--
especially susceptible to fleshpot-iness.

When “what was” seems preferable to “what should be.”
We are fleshpot guy.

I had fleshpots, but my neighbor was enslaved.
I had bread and fish, but others went hungry.

Times were but, even as my neighbor
was not allowed to eat in my restaurant,
to ride up front with me on the bus.
My neighbor wasn't allowed
to vote, to have a say over her own body,
to join my club, to serve on a vestry,
to be a priest, to be a bishop.

The good old days, even though my neighbor wasn't allowed
to live openly out of the closet,
to be who God made them to be.

My neighbor didn't have documents, had no drivers license drive,
was paid under the table, for work in terrible conditions,
for fear of deportation, of being separated from her family and children,
but I had my fleshpots.

My neighbor was shot for not pulling over, for pulling over,
for not putting his hands up, for putting his hands up,
for having a gun illegally, for having a gun legally,
for the fear he has a gun.
But, ah those fleshpots...

God doesn't work this way.
The world usually does;
the Church often has
but God doesn't, not ever.

What God doesn't do:
God doesn't do leftovers.
God doesn't warm over yesterday's miracles.
God doesn't serve leftover fleshpot.
God doesn't serve day old bread.
And God doesn't leave people behind,
and leave people out.

So God is always ahead of us,
always new, always now,
always pulling us out of our comfort zone,
out of our cozy groups,
and toward the stranger, toward the excluded,
toward the place where God is most needed.

So many of us want God to be like the favorite bands of our youth,
a septuagenarian strutting on stage singing,
Mick Jagger singing Satisfaction, Bob Dylan singing Like a Rolling Stone,
singing the old songs, the songs we know.

That may be what we want from the bands of my youth,
but that is not what God is like.
And if we want God to be like that,
we've met our inner Fleshpot Guy.

God doesn't go on reunion tour to play the old hits.
God only plays new material.
What does the Psalmist say again and again?
I will sing a new song, a new song.

Do we want day old bread?
Do we want warmed over, left over, fleshpots?
Do we want our faith to be like oldies music,
whether that is from the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's, or 90's?

Or do we want bread for eternal life?
Fresh, new every morning, daily bread?
Do we want to sing God's new song?

God doesn't do oldies, left overs and day old bargain loaves.
Each day dawns anew.
The song of my liberation was great for me,
but new verses have to be added for the liberation of others.

We live in a time when Fleshpot Guy is all around.
His is a voice of fear, of anxiety, of exclusion.
Make America Great Again.
Make the Church Great Again.
Make St. James Great Again.
Make Christ Church Cathedral Great Again.

The problem is that "again."
It can't be again, because it was never great for all.
When have we ever been great when we have left anyone behind?
when we have left anyone out?
when the bread at our table was shared with people only like us?
When have we ever been great when won't sing the new songs?

There has never been a better time for new songs,
in Spanish, Swahili or Chinese, in Salsa, Cumbia, Hip Hop and KPop.
They have never been more needed, more timely, more fresh.
If we want to be on the Exodus, rather than sitting with Pharoah,
we'd better be feasting on the manna new fallen with the dew each day,
singing the new song,
until all God's children are reunited, reconciled, redeemed and renewed.