

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

Julia Pachoud Bennett

September 10, 2003

Welcome to this new year and to today's communion service.

Being raised in the Episcopal church, I have always cherished the opportunity for communion. The smells, the sounds, the rituals..

Yet I'll confess that for many years Communion was, for me, a conflicted experience. After my mother's death when I was a teen,

I found that the taste of communion wine brought tears. I thought of Christ's suffering. I thought of my mother's. I thought of my own. Communion held more darkness than light. God the father. Who was this? My own images of a father God were broken—my own father, a well-meaning man, remained absent and consumed by grief. He did not ever fully recover from my mother's death. God the mother? My mother was absent, too, and yet present in the sting of missing her. What could my Christian heritage possibly hold for me? Who was I as a Christian? And how could I ever find grace in my darkness ? The only thing I was sure of was that I didn't really know anything except loss and endings.

The school year is an odd thing, isn't it? Even at this time of beginnings, we're facing an ending—nature is turning us toward the darkness of winter even as the massive rock of classes, meetings, clubs, co-curricular activities starts to roll fast down that slippery slope toward finals. Yes, finals. Inevitable isn't it—even the syllabus paints the ending and marks our days, even though only God can truly count them. You've been swept into a much bigger matrix of time, and space and relationship that even you can't picture. Yet, now is still a time of newness. Of new seeing, new thinking, perplexity and even overstimulation. Even we veterans, students and employees alike, feel a little lost. Lost. Small but

mighty, that word. Luke talks about that lost moment in the parable of the prodigal son. Imagine. You're all psyched, you've begged off of the mighty P's more than your inheritance (tuition, anyone?) and booked a wild adventure to lands unknown (college, anyone?). You get there and it's great—lots of new people, places, cool things to try. But, pretty soon you're just plain tapped—(oh my lord! Papers, quizzes, projects, READING!) You're overwhelmed, under graced and more than a little out of your mind.

And so it was for the prodigal son. He hit bottom. He met his darkness. Yet here it is that Luke, or rather God, turns on the light. “And he came to himself” says the scripture. Not “he woke up,” “he asked for help,” or “he found God.” He found himself. He retrieved himself. He came to himself.

For those of us in this place that are new, there's a certain grace in uncertainty. Coming to yourself is really a matter of seeing and allowing in all of what is around you. Feeling it. Grappling with it. Trusting in yourself and God that even when it's uncertain, there's a light there somewhere. But we don't really like uncertainty, and most of us don't like being newcomers. Who, after all, wants to look lost. Yet I would challenge you that that's exactly the challenge that's needed.

For those of us veterans, it's tough, I think. Pastor Paul has often jokes that he's still a sophomore—and we do joke about that, because nobody wants to be a freshman! Yet even Jesus challenges us to come to me as a little child. Being a “seasoned pro” can be often provide just enough justification to stop trying, to stop looking, to stop learning—and I mean really learning. I mean the hard stuff. Not lists, and facts, and exam questions. The core issues. “How am I meant to serve?” “Why do I resist this image/ idea/ notion?” “What is my calling and vocation?”

And somehow, in all of that wandering and wondering, you come to yourself. I did... Perhaps it's time, or wisdom, or new understanding—or all three—but I no longer cry at communion. I found myself. In

all of that confusion, I still chose to see. I chose “Yes” when coming to God. Just as our Prodigal Son chose “Yes” when coming home. At this time of beginnings, I wish for your “yes”—that you see the ending even as you taste the beginning. That you embrace the newness in yourself and God now and always.

HOLY COMMUNION

Wed., Sept. 12, 2003

Prelude "Let Us Break Bread Together" Dale Wood

Invocation

P: God said, "Let us create humankind in our own image."

C: And we were created in the image of God.

P: God said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, I AM, has sent you."

C: And we are called to free all who are oppressed

P: And Jesus told parables that we may understand

**C: There is more joy in heaven over one lost one returned
than over 99 who need no repentance.**

HYMN "Our Father, We Have Wandered" WOV 733 v. 1-2

Scripture Exodus 3: 13-18

Luke 15: 11-24

Sermon Dr. Julia Pachoud Bennett, Theater

HYMN 733 "Our Father, We Have Wandered" WOV 733 v. 3

Words of Institution

Distribution

Blessing & Dismissal

Postlude "Praise the Lord Rise Up Rejoicing" David Cherwien

ACTIVITIES FAIR - Wed., Sept. 10th...5:00-7:00 pm. Be sure to check out all the Campus Ministry tables at the Activities Fair, and see all the ways you can get involved in Campus Ministry!

NEXT SUNDAY--campus ministry leaders are installed in worship! Be a leader!!! Sign up at the activities fair Wednesday evening to lead service ventures, dorm activities, participate in Outreach, preach your senior sermon or lead worship.

ICE CREAM--New students, meet campus ministry leaders this week. We're serving ice cream at Bergsaker on Monday; Solberg on Tuesday from 6 -7:30. Learn more about involvement in campus ministry; meet some folks; enjoy an ice cream cone!

FAITH SEARCH. Augie students are invited to a day long exploration of Faith and the rational on Saturday, September 13 from 9-3 at Messiah New Hope Lutheran church in Sioux Falls. Does faith make sense? Dr. Don Bierle, author of SURPRISED BY FAITH will present. Cost is \$10, scholarships are available. See Pr. Paul today.