

Larry Donoghue memorial  
March 17, 2011

Isaiah 25:6-9  
Revelation 21:2-7  
John 14:1-6a

Larry stood in this pulpit  
Not too many months ago –  
Just before his last illness.

Larry stood in this pulpit,  
And he preached among us,  
Speaking like a man  
Who is at home in his own skin,  
Whose soul is settled.

Larry got into the pulpit,  
Prayed, fixed us with a gimlet eye,  
And said,  
I am queer – for buildings.

After that,  
For a few moments  
It hardly mattered what he said.  
But he preached, then,  
About those places  
Where the soul longs to make a home,  
Places of beauty, of grace, of welcome.  
His love for the church was deep,  
His love of the world was broad.  
He made us glad to share the journey with him,  
A journey to the many places  
Where we make a home with God.

Larry knew how to inhabit those places  
And make them welcoming.  
We could talk today about his many gifts,  
And his good life,

His time in the Navy,  
His time at Nashotah House.

We could talk about his faithful service  
At St. Luke's, Fort Collins, and  
St. Rafael's, Security.  
We could talk about how St. Laurence, Conifer,  
Grew under his leadership,  
And moved from the grange hall,  
With its wood stove and outhouse –  
where Larry covered the windows with black garbage bags  
To darken the church for the Easter Vigil –  
They moved from the grange hall to a restaurant,  
And from there to the VFW dance hall,  
And finally to the beautiful home  
So shaped by his vision  
Of what a church building could be –  
Where you see the cross behind the altar,  
Rather than the mountains,  
Where the columbarium is housed  
In the great baptismal font,  
So that the Christian soul can come home at last  
To the place where Christian life begins.  
To use words Larry loved,  
*The end is where we start from . . .*  
*And the end of all our exploring*  
*Will be to arrive where we started*  
*And know the place for the first time.\**

We could talk on and on of Larry,  
A man of such gifts,  
Who brought us so much laughter,  
His wide-ranging and inquiring mind,  
And the countless conversations he shared  
With so many friends and parishioners.  
We could talk about his will to justice,  
The many ways he reached out  
and served those in need.

We could speak of how he defended the rights of many.  
We could talk about his gracious hospitality,  
how he loved to spread a good table before his friends,  
About the deep joy he found in his vocation  
And in the life he shared with Bob.  
We could speak of his courage  
In living openly and authentically,  
Claiming his freedom.

We will say these things over and over in the days to come,  
As we remember him and mourn his loss.  
And we could keep on speaking right now  
Of his strengths and his gifts.  
But then we would be speaking of Larry,  
And I think,  
I believe,  
That at this moment,  
He would have us speak of God.

He would have us speak, now,  
Of the power of God  
To bring new life  
Out of death, out of emptiness, out of loss.

God's power is made known  
In our weakness,  
And the power of God  
At work in Larry's life  
Can only be truly known  
If we speak now,  
Reverently and with deep respect,  
Of his brokenness.

Some years ago  
Larry's good life was shattered  
When his long, long relationship with Bob  
Fell apart.

Heartbroken, hopeless,  
Larry entered a deep darkness  
Where he remained, trapped and alone.  
Some of you have known that darkness.  
It can be the depths of human experience,  
Dust and ashes  
And the absence of God.  
Larry was trapped there,  
In that dark and lonely place.  
Nothing brought relief. Nothing.

And then, after too long  
By what Larry believed to be an act of sheer grace,  
The darkness lifted,  
and he came back to life.

He enjoyed some good times.  
He laughed with friends  
And did some good work.  
But then the pain began, terrible pain,  
And he struggled with it.  
Though it troubled him less than the darkness had,  
The pain began to take over his life.  
Then he found out what it was.

It could have been tragic.  
News of a terminal illness is not good news.  
And yet,  
Larry, by grace, let his illness be the place  
Where the good news  
Came to life.

Here is the good news.  
Even as he came to understand  
That his life was ending,  
Larry found hope.

He found hope,

Because Bob took Larry into his home,  
To shelter him,  
Tend to him,  
And bring him comfort.

He brought him comfort,  
And from that comfort, came joy.  
Larry and Bob were reconciled.  
Love came back to life.

Larry experienced,  
In his broken body,  
As in his darkened mind,  
The promises of God  
Coming alive.

Larry, and Larry and Bob together,  
Lived again in the power of God,  
The God who goes inside  
The wounded and the broken hearted  
And makes a home in them,  
And from within,  
Heals and makes whole.

The God of the prophets,  
Who heals the wounded soul,  
Binds up the broken hearted,  
And sets the prisoners free,  
That God yearns to work  
In our own lives,  
Here and now.

The God whom we know best  
In Jesus of Nazareth,  
Who brings all the promises of God to life,  
That God will enter our deepest darkness  
And bring us back into the light.

God will come alive in us,  
If we make a home  
Where God can be born.  
Larry, and Larry and Bob together,  
Made a home for God,  
And let God make new love.

Larry had a special devotion to Mary,  
Who made a home for God within her body  
And mothered the divine into our life.

Like her, Larry let God in.  
He consented,  
And let God's will to life  
Heal him,  
And make him new and whole,  
Even as he died.

When we see Larry's life,  
We see the power of the resurrection at work.

Larry lived in the power of the resurrection  
When light returned to his darkened mind,  
When love came back to his broken heart,  
When he became a partner in mutual forgiveness  
And reconciliation.  
In his body,  
In his heart and mind and soul,  
He lived the power of God  
To heal and make whole.

This is how we know the resurrection is real –  
When it takes place  
In the choices and actions of our lives.

Otherwise, it's just a bunch of words and pictures.

That resurrection power became real,

When Larry gave God a home within himself.  
It was real, it was true,  
And it was enough.

It was enough for Larry,  
And yet in God,  
There is always more than enough.

The resurrection power  
That changed Larry's life  
Was the beginning.

About the end,  
And the beginning beyond the end,  
Who can know?

We can only speak in images –  
The images and promises of scripture  
That leave our minds in darkness  
And yet speak truth and bring light to our hearts.

The table, the feast,  
The spring of living water,  
The new Jerusalem filled with buildings Larry would love,  
All things made new,  
A home in the house of God.

Larry is home.  
In the now that is always,  
All the promises of God  
Have made their home in him,  
And come to life.

\* T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*