

Reflection *The Last Crust of Bread*

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*Today we celebrate a Unitarian Universalist communion with cranberry juice and cornbread. Our service is grounded in the meaning of communion – an act of sharing that invokes the promise of welcome. Please join us to explore this whole notion of welcome, and its other side, sacrifice.*

I've asked our ushers to open our doors at this time.

As a child, fasting on Yom Kippur was considered a mark of maturity. One year, I was old enough to choose not to eat, to not bring my lunchbox to school, to ignore tempting odors wafting from the kitchen. It was also an opportunity for my elderly grandparents to drive my dad crazy. They'd announce that they were fasting and he'd announce they had too many health issues what were they thinking. No matter what their resolve, we'd end up at the end of the day with a feast of brisket and potato latki and chicken soup with matzo balls and forgettable vegetables. So, Yom Kippur was yet another holy day when we could act out all the complexities of our love.

I had the benefit of watching one of my favorite comedies this past week, probably a favorite of a lot of Unitarian Universalist ministers, "My Big, Fat, Greek Wedding." Our reading this morning evokes that scene in the movie when Toula and Ian drive his reserved, upper-middle-class white bread parents to her house for a first dinner with the in-laws and encounter forty Portokaloses roasting a lamb on the front lawn. Their welcome is overwhelming. In fact, most of the movie is devoted to Ian Miller and his family being steamrolled by the Portokalos charm, and all the complexities of their love.

I sometimes wonder what it is like for guests here on Sunday morning. Here we are, with all of our faults and frailties, setting them aside while we're together to make a welcome. There is a great feeling here. We enjoy coming, we enjoy the music and cooking and the feeling of warmth and abundance. We like to imagine ourselves throwing open the doors to our sanctuary wide, welcoming all who are looking for sustenance of the mind and spirit. But nevertheless, even with the great feeling, it can get crowded in here. It can get crowded with our fears that we won't be able to keep feeling great; that if we leave the doors open too wide, we'll lose some of our warmth. It's like the first time parents meet the ones their children love. Who is this person; is this person good? "Is he good? I don't know!" Gus Portokalos laments. "Is he Greek? I don't know." Each and every one of us in this sanctuary came in for the first time and was met by at least one person wondering "Is he good? I don't know! Will she want to change things? I don't know! Will he care about me? I don't know! Will there be anything left for me when we're done? I don't know!"

We are human, and there are times when, as in our litany of atonement, we fuel our separateness with our needs and our fear they won't be met. And that is our hell. But we are human, and there are times when we overcome everything, all our doubts about who will get the last crust of bread and instead we bake the bread and bring it to the table and leave the doors open wide and let our warmth flow outside into the heaven of connectedness. For those moments, let us give thanks, because they are all the sweeter for the complexities of our love.