

7th Sunday 2017

(Play heart and soul) Can you name that tune? It's Heart and Soul and I imagine that many of you have banged out "heart and soul" at one time or another. And if you have, you know that it can go on forever, constantly repeating until you just get tired of the same melody over and over. "Heart and Soul". It's another way of saying one's "best" self. When you give yourself "heart and soul" to someone or something, you're giving your "all".

I began thinking about the song a

nd the expression "heart and soul" for a few reasons. The first is the visit of the Boston College Liturgy Arts Group who are here sharing their gift of music with us. They are the ones who animate the Liturgy at BC with their music which gives "heart and soul" to a ritual which is "lifeless" without it. Music resonates with our hearts and sings "soul". That's why we speak of "soul" music.

Another reason I'm thinking about heart and soul is the of Jo Jo David who died this past year and who I know was the "heart and soul" of LAG. We remember him tonight with love and gratitude as we do Anne Marie and Madeline. And then there are you faithful Eagles who are here tonight because you discovered, or began to discover your "Best self", your heart and soul during your years at Boston College. The formative years at BC are cherished and remembered.

But there is another reason that the melody of heart and soul has been playing in my mind. It's the film. Manchester by the Sea which I saw the other day while I was in Boston. I have been haunted by the film see I saw it. It really is about a man who loses his heart and soul because of a tragic accident for which he blames himself. He goes through life, half alive, "heartless and soulless" except for occasional explosions of anger. And although you would hope that he could forgive himself, the film leaves you with the haunting realization that sometimes you just can't "beat it". But if the main character, Lee has lost his heart and his soul, the music, the Sound track" reveals the opposite. The music sings and plays the depths of Lee's love and loss and his longing for something

more from life than just “living”. The music “behind the scenes” that plays on our heartstrings mixes soul, jazz, classical and contemporary. And it serves to make the human story even more poignant.

At this point you may be thinking, what does Manchester by the Sea have to do with today’s scriptures? What possible connection can there be? Very simply, what we have just heard is the “heart and soul” of the Judeo-Christian tradition. These scripture give us the very essence of what it means to be in an intimate relationship with God, our creator who calls us to be Holy as God is Holy. In other words, these words of scripture reveal to us how to be our “best” selves. As St Ignatius reminds us at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises, We are created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord and by this means to save our souls. In other words we are invited to live heart and soul and not half-heartedly and not soullessly. And how do we “praise, reverence and serve God”. We do this in love of the “other”, not just the Other/ God but the other, the one who is not me.

In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus says he has come to fulfill the law. He takes the code of Leviticus and opens it up not just to one’s own but to the “other”, the enemy. This is what is so remarkable about the way that Jesus speaks of God’s commands. It is “more” than just loving friends. It’s about loving the “other”, the stranger, the alien, those who think or act differently from mes. That may seem impossible in our present climate of mistrust and recrimination. But it is what the Gospel calls us to as Christians. It is the pathway of reconciliation.

To return to Manchester by the sea, it seems that the reason that Lee can only live half-heartedly and soullessly is that the he cannot forgive himself. The “enemy” whom he must love is “within” and not “outside’. Isn’t that the truth? For us to be our “best” selves, living fully, with heart and soul, we must love and accept ourselves as God love us. That’s at the heart of those Spiritual Exercises as well. We are loved, sinners. We are not perfect but God embraces us as we are. “Heart and Soul I fell in love with you” That is what our God sings to us in Jesus Christ and in the spirit. “ all belong to you, and you to Christ, and Christ to God”