**The Big Hooray!**

The day began just like any other school day; except that today there was a special visitor. The younger children were already sitting patiently in the school hall and the visitor was with them. But waiting patiently for the older children was hard and the young ones began to fidget just a little bit because that’s what patient youngsters do when they are a little bit excited and want something to begin.

So, the visitor made a suggestion; she invited the children to stand up and stretch and then best of all, she invited them to shout a big Hooray! Which they all did very enthusiastically; because that’s what patient youngsters do when they are a little bit excited and want something to begin.

The visitor then made a plan with the young children; because that’s visitors do when they are with patient youngsters who are a little bit excited and want something to begin.

The plan was to sit down again and slowly breath lots of air into their little lungs so that they could let out another big Hooray! when the older children came in. This was a very helpful plan because the breathing gave the children something to do with their excitement.

Eventually, when the older children finally arrived, the visitor gave a special signal to the younger children who let out the biggest Hooray! the school hall had ever heard.

In fact it was so big that the school hall couldn’t keep it in and as soon as the big hooray reached the ceiling the roof flew up into the air and away across the surrounding town.

As it went, the hoorays could be heard all over the place, in a kitchen where a lonely widow sat all alone, in a the hospital where someone lay dying, in through the bars on a prison window, a troubled teenager heard it while they were sitting on the park bench and although he didn’t know it at the time his anxious mother heard it as well.

The big hooray went out into the countryside into the rain clouds, out through the river and into the sea. It washed up on the far shore and into a sea shell that was picked up by a little girl who shared its message with her friends…

Now, I’m simply passing the story of the Big Hooray! on to you and I can’t predict what you will do with it. But let me tell you how it helps me listen to today’s readings.

I think the Big Hooray is an echo from the beginning of time when God looked with loving wonder at the beauty of creation and whispered: “Indeed it is very good.” And because it was God’s whisper it enters every human soul as God breathes us into being.

This bothers the Tempter and that is why the Tempter tried to distract Jesus from his task of reminding us of the whisper within us.

And let’s not forget that Jesus is a Jew, so he will have heard how Moses instructed people to say Hooray whenever they were gathered for worship. His advice was: don’t get distracted by the ritual. Make sure to remember why we are offering something to God together.

We are saying Hooray! For so many things. Now Moses gives just three examples; but they happen to be very significant ones because they explain that we are part of a shared story: Called from one place to another but becoming something special, exploited none the less when enslaved in Egypt but liberated by God who provides a new homeland. No wonder those who love God think it worth our while to say Hooray! when we gather for worship.

But please, spare the roof!

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