

-My favorite childhood Disney movie was *Lion King*. We all can all probably think of a tune from the popular Disney movie: *Lion King*. "The Circle of Life" where Simba (the baby lion) is raised up above the animal kingdom or "Hakuna Matata!" sung by Timon and Pumba. One of the biggest moments of the film that I remember is when Mufasa (Simba's dad who died earlier in the movie) speaks to Simba through the clouds with James Earl Jones' voice: "Remember who you are." Remember who you are. Of course this leads Simba back for the rest of the movie to fight off the evil lion named Scar for his rightful place in the Circle of Life, but that's another story.

-I love how, really, the entire premise of *Lion King* is based on this sacred practice of "remembering". Simba becomes king again not because he just inherits it, but because he does the work of remembering.

-On this St. Francis of Assisi Sunday, I think we too are called to do the work of remembering.

-St. Francis knew a thing or two about remembering when he said: "Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received-only what you have given: a full heart enriched by honest service, love, sacrifice and courage."

-But, I'm going to suggest that there is more to remembering than just love and service. Though that is a great start. (No disrespect St. Francis). In my opinion, love and service are actually *outcomes* of remembering. So how does this work?

-Well first off, let's go back to our Genesis story. Now, let's be honest: everyone knows this story. Even people who have never read the bible know the creation story of Adam and Eve. It's just a fact. Here's the problem: we don't remember this story *correctly*.

-In conversations I have had with my friend Laurie Franklin, the rabbinic leader at Har Shalom Synagogue in Missoula, she has said to me time several times that 99% of bibles use a translation of the original hebrew that in her words is "garbage". (Actually she uses a different word which I can't say from this pulpit).

-Here's the problem: (I'll start at verse 21) "So, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man." At first glance, this seems quite straight forward: There's a man, and another human is created from his ribs, and it's a woman. Pretty clear, right? Actually, not really. Without getting too deep into it, Hebrew is a gendered language and the masculine form of a word is always the default (whether it is neutral or not. For example the word "door" is masculine, not gender neutral) Rabbinic scholars are used this hokey trait of the Hebrew language and for thousands of years have always read the context in order to know whether the item is actually male or neutral (for example, it would not make sense for me to say: "the door didn't shut right. So, I had to take off *his* hinges and oil *his* latch in order to get *him* to shut properly." No rabbi worth their salt

would translate a sentence like that. But our mostly Christian bible translators seem to forget this.) So, if you go back to Genesis 1:26-27, it reads: "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created the human ones in God's image, in God's image, God created male and female." The human is a *they* (both male and female) in God's image, not just a male. In this light, the gender neutral "they" or just "human one" is more appropriate in our text today than just "he". Here is the second wrong thing about how we remember this text: the word "rib". Sure, it can be translated as that, but it isn't accurate here. This word for thousands of years has traditionally (goes back to Exodus) been understood to mean "side" - it was a construction term referring to the side or the wall of the Tabernacle. So, if we understand that the phrase should mean "And God took the side of the Human...", all of a sudden, things start to make a bit more sense, and reminiscent of [Plato's Symposium \(Plato might have even borrowed this thinking from this story\), even: the original human being was both male and female, with multiple sides, and God separated them](#). From the side of "they", God made "male" and "female." Why am I going into this in such detail on Blessing of the Animals Sunday? *Because what and how we "remember" matters*. We were not created to be best, second best, third best, and so on.....we (male and female) were created side by side. Adam's statement makes much more sense when we see it this way: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" Woman and man share the same bone, same flesh, and as it turns out: same side as well. We are intimately connected in more ways we can even imagine.

-There is a wonderful book as well as new PBS documentary done by Anatomist Neil Shubin titled *Your Inner Fish*. Check it out if you haven't heard of it because it's extremely well done. In a very accessible way, Shubin details how all of our human pieces and even actions (walking, holding onto something, moving our mouths, etc.) is connected to other creatures who lived thousands of years ago. Through the process of evolution, we have inherited these pieces as human beings. But beyond that, other creatures have as well! Infact, Shubin points out that bone structure between human beings, apes, lions, dogs, cats, horses, lizards, and, yes, fish are all the same! Sure, some bones are larger in some creatures than in others (in order to provide for swimming or flying or crawling, or whatever the creature does), but structurally, we are connected. We are, in many ways, created side by side.

-So here is the question: have we forgotten this? It's interesting in our gospel text for today, Jesus not only brings up "the lillies and birds of the air" but also this interesting term of "worry". Literally, the greek word (*merimnao*) can be translated as to be "pulled into pieces." As someone who has suffered from anxiety and who has anxiety and worry

in my family history, I can relate a little bit to this ancient understanding. Worry does pull you into pieces. But worry does also put our blinders on too. How many of you have gotten so worried that you have lost something that when you finally find it you realized it was lying right in front of you the entire time? Worry pulls us apart not only from each other but from our own perspective. Worry leads to forgetting.

-So, maybe this Blessing of the Animals Sunday, our calling is to remember. Not just how much we love our pet or wild animals, but how we radically stand with them. One cannot be separated and pulled away if we are together side by side.

-“Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” You bet. Our very survival, in so many ways, depends on remembering. May we have the courage to do so, side by side. Amen.