

I love to eat. Just about anything. We have several members of my extended family who are now vegetarian – and I've learned how to cook for them and enjoy their dishes as well. Over the last few years I've become friends with a priest who is vegan. Now that's been something of a challenge. Some of the dishes he serves are delicious; some not so much! I always prefer when we go out to a restaurant where he has choices and I have choices!

On one of my visits at his rectory, I arrived, and he said "I have to run out – be back in 30 minutes or so." I put my suitcase in a guest room and wandered into the kitchen, where there was a pot on the stove. I opened it up, wasn't impressed with the smell, ventured a taste and gagged. UGH! AWFUL!

When he returned, I said "Let's go out to dinner tonight – my treat!" He said, "No, I'm cooking." "The soup that's on the stove?" I asked. "Yes." "It's tasteless! It tastes like (can't say what I said in a church publication!" And sometimes I have a habit of opening my mouth only to insert my foot.) He burst out laughing. "That's not soup," he chuckled, "it's the beginning of chili that I have yet to finish. I'll bet it tasted pretty bad."

The chili was later completed and was actually quite wonderful (although I think it would have been better with some beef in it!)

I remembered this story this week. We sent out communication at the beginning of this week that there was possible exposure, and someone tested positive and is symptomatic. As you read this, I'm partway through a 2 week quarantine which will take me to July 5th. (I'm thinking AGAIN! – I thought we were in phase 2!) So far I'm feeling fine and have no symptoms. I'm thinking of my vegan chili experience in terms of the pandemic – and my current personal situation. How many times have I seen a problem or challenge in my life and scooped up a big taste of it and complained to God that it's tasteless and not good enough? We all do this I think from time to time. We look at our families, our bodies, our work situations, our churches (pastors!) and see blandness and things not working out like we'd hoped. We're kind of like the Israelites complaining about manna and quail in the desert – seeing God's provision for the basics as less than nourishing, tasteless, 'miserable food' (Numbers 21:5).

We miss the fact that GOD ISN'T FINISHED WITH IT YET: isn't finished with this pandemic yet (and I'm certainly being deeply reminded of this right now), our families, our bodies, our work situations, our churches and pastors; isn't finished with US yet. There's more to be added, more spice to mix in, more flavor than we imagined. We tend to jump the gun and think that this pot of stuff in front of us – be it a crisis, a problem, a decision, a quarantine! a persistent challenge – is all that there is. But God has so much more for us if we're willing to be patient and persistent and trust the one who knows the full recipe for life. Apparently there is more I yet need to learn from COVID-19.

This lesson has been resonating with me since my 'chili incident'. It's become part of my prayer life, especially in this pandemic. "Lord, help me not to dig into whatever is in front of me and think that's all there is. Grant me the patience to let you add the ingredients necessary to make it a satisfying, flavorful, nourishing experience." Whether I get COVID or not, God knows the recipe; God knows the final outcome. I'm going to have to try to surrender more deeply and see what happens. Please pray for the healing of our world.....and Bon Appetit! (help and inspiration from Bob Kaylor, "The Great Unfinished" in HOMILETICS ONLINE, 12 February 2020)

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