

Religion Column – Leader-Telegram
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Pastor, Plymouth UCC, Eau Claire

I often go to the cupboard or fridge looking for a snack, but with no specific idea of what, just me heading confidently to the larder with the idea of “snack” in my head – and then, arriving at the snack-plenty larder, I discover that nothing meets my longing. Even after the tenth scan, blank-faced and disappointed-yet-still-hopeful, I scan again just to be sure that the goodly snack elves didn’t maybe leave a tin or box of *something or other*. Just in case, you never know ...

Sometimes I know I want *something*, but I don’t know what I want until I see it. If I find it, I say, “Ahhh, that’s it!” and it is a time of great joy, even if I am the only one celebrating, and even if I do it silently so I don’t interrupt the TV. Those times of longing can be frustrating. Those longings for something that I can’t quite describe or put into words are palpable and physical longings, maddening in their ambiguity. I think that longing compels some of us to religious exploration, and some to a church, to worship – maybe even to be active participants in the quest for that something *other*, that *something* outside and greater than our humanity which we feel missing from our lives. We want to touch and taste and hear and feel it with every atom, every physical and mystical element of our being, to be drenched with its presence, to be intimately connected to the Divine Other and to know that somehow, in the infinite stretches of the universe, we matter, and that in the seemingly endless reaches of evil, good will prevail.

Longing can be a bitter experience. We prefer resolution and instant gratification. But as the world of gastronomy understands, a few bitters before breaking bread at mealtime enhances the anticipation, prepares the mouth and stomach, incites our tongue to better taste the goodness and makes us more alive to the holy swirlings of the delicious. Some might wonder, as we come into Holy Week, how can we, or perhaps even how dare we, celebrate the joy of Easter in the midst of a world whose cup runneth over with war, hunger, genocide, disease, natural disasters, or fill-in-the-blank with your suffering. But we who long for a more perfect world, a more loving and compassionate world, will delve deep into Holy Week and celebrate Easter precisely because of our brokenness. Because in the face of such deep despair, the only sane response is to embrace hope and tender our joy, laughing in holy ecstasy at the face of the abyss, going to the tomb a ninth and a tenth and an eleventh time, until we realize that what we seek is no longer there because it is here, among and within us, waiting for us to notice it and say “Ahh...”.