

From This Corner

Tofu Turkey and Other Counterfeits

Larry Baird

I woke up greatly disturbed. It was Thanksgiving Day and someone had messed with the menu. Instead of real turkey there it was. It was tofu turkey. I cannot adequately express how disappointed I was. The real thing had been replaced by an imposter. I rejoiced to awake and see a real turkey was being prepared. We probably all have expectations when it comes to Thanksgiving Day. I have talked about some of those in previous columns.

Sometimes our disappointments are merely matters of preference, although I still cannot imagine anybody wanting tofu turkey. On other occasions, they take on greater significance. I share with you one of these during this month in which we celebrate Thanksgiving.

Christians observe Thanksgiving far more often than does our nation. Hopefully it is every Sabbath, but at least on the Sundays when we observe Holy Communion. We know too, if we are thoughtful, what would be missing in our experience of the sacrament. For instance, if there was no bread, communion would be incomplete. If there was no cup, communion would be seriously diminished. Most Christians would notice immediately if one of these elements was missing or denied them. Once, back in the sixties, I was served Holy Communion with the elements being coffee and donuts. I think the celebrant was trying to be “hip” as we used to say. Afterwards it left a bad taste in my mouth even though I really enjoy coffee and donuts. This was not Holy Communion. The celebrant was just doing “his thing.” Whenever we do our thing with holy things, it is counterfeit.

The Church has, through the ages, put in place what is commonly referred to as “The Prayer of Great Thanksgiving.” In it the very core of our faith, our doctrine, if you will, is expressed in a concise yet eloquent fashion. Sometimes in today's so called “progressive context” we are presented with a pastor's personalized or abbreviated version of this prayer. In the worst cases the Prayer of Great Thanksgiving may even be altered to satisfy whatever theology or lack thereof has been embraced by the celebrant. In those cases it is a counterfeit sacrament. Consequently it is of far more serious import than tofu turkey.

This Thanksgiving I wish you whatever it is your heart desires, even I suppose tofu turkey, but when it comes to Holy Communion I pray you participate in the real thing that carries with it the sum and substance of the apostolic faith.