

## Reading: “The Facts of Life” by Padraig Ó Tuama

That you were born  
and you will die.

That you will sometimes love enough  
and sometimes not.

That you will lie  
if only to yourself.

That you will get tired.

That you will learn most from the situations  
you did not choose.

That there will be some things that move you  
more than you can say.

That you will live  
that you must be loved.

That you will avoid questions most urgently in need of  
your attention.

That you began as the fusion of a sperm and an egg  
of two people who once were strangers  
and may well still be.

That life isn't fair.  
That life is sometimes good  
and sometimes better than good.

That life is often not so good.

That life is real

and if you can survive it, well,  
survive it well  
with love  
and art  
and meaning given  
where meaning's scarce.

That you will learn to live with regret.  
That you will learn to live with respect.

That the structures that constrict you  
may not be permanently constraining.

That you will probably be okay.

That you must accept change  
before you die  
but you will die anyway.

So you might as well live  
and you might as well love.  
You might as well love.  
You might as well love.

### **Pastoral Message: "You Might As Well"**

We learn most from the situations we did not choose.

The structures that constrict us may not be permanently constraining.

We will probably be okay.

We all will die anyway.

But to live and to love—if all we have is that—*Dayenu*.

*Dayenu*, it would have been enough.

*Dayenu* is Hebrew, it means, “it would be sufficient” or “it would have been enough.”

It is the joyful song sung at the end of a Passover meal, the Seder dinner.

This week is both Holy Week—

the week of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, to the cross, the sky—and the beginning of Passover,

which starts this Wednesday night.

The Passover story is the story of the Moses vs. Pharaoh,

God vs. the Egyptians, plague vs the people.

And the people win. The plague passes over.

*Dayenu.*

The song “*Dayenu*” is set to a tune at least 1,000 years old, and the stanzas look back on the journey from slavery,

to the miracle of release and freedom,

to the closeness to God that God gave her people

throughout their times of struggle and afterwards.

The people sing:

If God had brought us out of slavery, *Dayenu*. It would have been enough.

If God had split the sea for us, *Dayenu*.

If God had fed us manna in the Wilderness, *Dayenu*.

If God had given us the Sabbath, *Dayenu*.

Any of these gifts, they would have been enough.

And yet: blessing on top of blessing, they came.

What is *enough*, right now?

Some of us can't get enough alone time,  
some of us can't get enough connection time.

No one seems to feel they have enough toilet paper—even after weeks of people stocking up, the stores can't keep it on the shelves.

Taking empty shelves as a guide, no one seems to feel they have enough meat, or flour, or Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

We are a people ruled by Pharaoh, and we do not trust in manna.

The plague hovers over our homes,  
smaller than locusts, deadlier than boils,  
and instead of sacrificial blood to mark our thresholds,  
we enact new rituals of cleansing and purification.

In the Hebrew Bible, Pharaoh has no name besides Pharaoh.

My colleague Jake Morrill, sharing some quotes he had found, offered that Pharaoh is nameless because Pharaoh

is “the evil that is always among us,  
looking for ways to oppress the poor, the stranger, the faithful.”

Others write that the word Pharaoh, in the Hebrew language,  
can be understood not to simply mean a person,

but the palace itself, and from there, the whole system of fear, control, and inequity that we know as Empire.

“The machinery whose gears don't take into account the preciousness of human life.”

Long after Exodus, after the plagues, after the wilderness,

after the manna and Mt. Sinai and the commandments,  
many thousands of years after Pharaoh lived and died  
and Moses lived and died and Aaron lived and died,  
a boy named Jesus was born.

And because life sometimes isn't fair  
and life is often not so good,  
once again a Pharaoh was on the throne,  
but this time he was called King Herod, Caesar, Pontius Pilate.  
Because Pharaoh has no name, and many names;  
no face, and many faces.

On Palm Sunday, which is today,  
that young man Jesus walked with his raggedy band  
towards the gleaming capital.

He didn't even have a steed, he just walked on foot in the dirt. His followers steal  
a donkey for him,

which is not a huge upgrade.

In the gospels, the story says that people saw him traveling and put palms down in  
his path,  
keeping the dirt of the road from spattering up all around him,  
to keep him clean,  
and they called out, Hosanna in the highest heaven.

They make their way to the center of the Holy City.

There Jesus and his friends—some better friends than others—will face down that ancient evil of oppression,

the evil that has no name and many names.

They face the hard heart of Pharaoh.

They face the power of empire.

They face the army of Caesar.

They face the hypocrisy of the priests.

They face the apathy of Pilate.

We know this story. And so we know, they will lose.

This week, from home, we share these two journeys,  
which happened many thousands of years apart,  
yet are celebrated around the same time every year.

We share the triumphal escape from Pharaoh's oppression  
by the Hebrew people.

Confident, they watch the plague spare them  
and take their enemies.

Exultant, they pass through the parted Red Sea  
and watch their enemies drown.

Proud, alone, they enter the wilderness.

And then...what?

How long will they be in the wilderness?

They don't know.

Fear grows.

Within just a few days of their triumphant parade,  
they have turned on their leader, Moses.  
They are sick of eating manna.  
They want a God they can see and touch—a golden calf.  
They don't know when they will emerge from their isolation  
to that promised land, the land of milk and honey.

And for Jesus, thousands of years later,  
his raggedy and triumphant entry into Jerusalem  
also descends into the belly of despair, of betrayal, of death.

“It is Caesar's week.  
But it is God's world.” (Roger Cowan)

We don't know how long we will be in the wilderness.  
We don't know when our land of Canaan will appear before us.  
Before we celebrate Easter and sing Hallelujah,  
the shadow of Good Friday lies ahead of us.

Truly this year Easter, in all its joyful glory,  
    shall be a moveable feast.  
We will celebrate it next week, because the calendar says so.  
And yet! we will celebrate it again  
    some other day in the future, together,

together we will celebrate the triumph of life over death.

“We are an Easter people,  
living in a Good Friday world.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Living.

*Dayenu*... It is enough, for now.

For now, my people of the wilderness, my Easter people,

We hold fast to the things we do know,

the manna that feeds our soul.

Padraig O Tuama teaches us the “Facts of Life.”

This week, it is a fact of your life and of mine:

That you will sometimes love enough  
and sometimes not.

That you will get tired.

That you will learn most from the situations  
you did not choose.

That there will be some things that move you  
more than you can say.

That life isn't fair.

That life is sometimes good  
and sometimes better than good.

That life is often not so good.

That life is real

and if you can survive it, well,

survive it well

with love

and art...

That you will probably be okay.

So you might as well live  
and you might as well love.

You might as well love.

You might as well love.

*Amen.*