

Thanks for leftovers

What do you do with leftover after Thanksgiving dinner? One of my most enjoyable experiences while in the States was to be invited to share a Thanksgiving meal with a family. Usually, food was as plentiful as the conversation. The turkey and the trimmings put weight on anyone who might be diet conscious. Sampling each dessert added to one's girth. People came with their best dishes and everyone wanted to sample them. No one felt guilty or apologetic for going back for seconds. After the eating was over, the men slept through the football games on TV while the women gathered in the kitchen doing a post mortem as they shared tastes, recipes and wondered.

Yes, what do you do with leftovers? First of all, you invite everyone to take home a doggy bag of food by suggesting they don't have to cook for a few days or, if they are hungry at midnight, they can have a snack. Some, out of courtesy, accept the invitation, realizing they are just too full to eat for a few days, but, at least, when the hunger pains return, they can be soothed by indulging in some leftovers.

Of course, what to do with leftovers is a universal problem. Some may feed some of their doggy bag to their cat or dog; but, then again, we might wonder if the leftovers may be too rich for such four-legged creatures.

Usually, chefs and cook experts make all kinds of suggestions on TV on how to use leftovers more creatively. Many people may show a passing interest in their suggestions but begin to wonder about having to face into eating leftover turkey no matter how creatively it was prepared.

I often wonder what restaurants do with leftovers. I realize some end in garbage to disappear. Some may be shared with some lonely person living alone.

Coming up to Thanksgiving, all this made me think of people who may be categorized as "leftover people." They are "leftover" in the sense that we may have designated them as "unproductive," "useless," "have nothing to contribute," "don't belong anywhere," "misfits," "not normal like the rest of us," "don't belong to society," "have nothing to contribute to society,"

They may have been let go from their job because they were not productive or didn't fit in. They may not belong to a certain social class. They may not have the mental aptitude to be a scholar. They may be clumsy, awkward, uncultured, and socially graceless. The list of leftover people goes on and on, added to by normal people.

I think of someone like Beethoven who had an unorthodox style of playing the piano. He was more interested in creating his own musical scores rather than playing the classical pieces of his time. He just didn't fit the frame of expectation that was created for him; yet, he created masterpieces in spite of it.

Albert Einstein did not speak until he was four and could not read until age nine. He was described by his teacher as "mentally slow, unsociable and adrift in his foolish dreams." Yet, he showed that everything can be relative. Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper editor who complained that he was lacking in creative ideas. Yet, his genius attracts millions around the world daily. Thomas Edison's teachers advised his parents to keep him home from school, saying that he was "too stupid to learn anything." Yet, this prolific inventor, held over a thousand US patents in his name.

Obviously, such persons lived to contradict their naysayers and excelled in their respective fields as to become a surprise to those who thought they knew them. Then, there is Jesus. Because his hometown neighbours and friends thought they knew all about Jesus, they did not expect greatness from him. Their lack of faith proved to be an obstacle; they found Him "too much for them." He did not fit into their frame of reference of the "boy next door and son of the carpenter." They knew where he lived and who his family was, they also thought they knew what he could accomplish and who he would become. As a result Jesus "could work no miracle" among them."

It is sad that so often a person has to leave their own neighbourhood and friends and travel beyond its confines to spread their wings; unshackle their gifts and creativity; find their niche in society; to prove that they are contributors, not "leftovers."

Seeing that we don't have Thanksgiving in Ireland, I will not have to worry about leftovers and what to do with them. Instead, it will give me a chance to appreciate the persons who broke the imposed frame, unshackled themselves from the judgment and rejection of their peers. After all, there is no such thing as a leftover when everyone feels appreciated. Then, every day is a thanksgiving day.