



# Blessings

SACRAMENTORS®: A Process of Sanctification for Catholic Men and Women

## LENT 2008

### Do I Need to Change?

by Fr. Bob Camuso

In our current presidential election campaigns, we've heard a lot of candidates talk about change. For instance, Barack Obama's campaign slogan is, "Change we can believe in." Hillary Clinton speaks of her 35 years of experience "Making change." John Edwards claims he has, "The change we need." On the Republican side, John McCain says he is most proud of the "Change he brought about in Iraq that saved American lives." Mitt Romney insists he's the candidate to bring "Change to Washington." Mike Huckabee talks about his change in lifestyle when he weighed over 300 pounds and was diagnosed with diabetes five years ago. He immediately changed his

diet, started exercising, and lost 110 pounds to become a model of personal change, to inspire others to change.

Someone once said that the only thing we can be absolutely certain about is change (I would add death and taxes). Despite its certainty, change is difficult for most of us, especially as we get older. Yet, we know there are consequences when change is needed and we refuse to cooperate. Recently, I met a man in his fifties who has stage-four lung cancer. He has smoked since he was a young man and tried to quit several times, but didn't. His doctor told him that he has less than a year to live.

When we refuse to change for the better, we

can count on this: things are not going to remain as they've always been. For instance, we may refuse to end an addiction of smoking or drinking too much, or eating too much. We might insist that our addiction is okay, and, after all, we enjoy smoking or drinking too much, or eating too much. A friend of mine who is obese told me this: "I'd rather die a few years sooner than deny myself the joy of enjoying all the food I want to eat."

It's easy to justify our choices with such explanations. Yet, one day we may be told by a doctor, as Mike Huckabee was told, that we must change, or die. In such a case, change happens to us

See "Change" on page 7

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### The purpose

of the SacraMentors® movement is to provide men and women with small communities of other men and women, who will support and sustain them in their efforts to live a Christian life which calls them to forgive themselves and others, bless the world, and serve the Church.

### Lurching Towards Holiness

By Mary Anne Reynolds

I always welcome the return of Lent. New Year's resolutions are forgotten, we have a few weeks of "ordinary time" and I lose focus. Such a distractible disciple! As a recovering drama queen, I'm not sure what to do with ordinary time – both liturgically and on the calendar. I seem to forever do what I call the "Transfiguration Two-Step." Matthew's account

(17:2-8) of the Transfiguration says this: *He was transfigured before their eyes. His face became as dazzling as the sun, his clothes as radiant as light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, how good it is to be here! With your permission I will erect three booths here, one for you, one for Moses, and*

*one for Elijah." He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them. Out of the cloud came a voice which said, "This is my beloved Son on whom my favor rests. Listen to him." When they heard this, the disciples fell forward on the ground, overcome with fear. Jesus came toward them and laying his hand on*

See "Lurching," on page 9




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“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

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## Reflections

by *Cyndie Ulrich, Executive Director, SacraMentors®*

Uh-h-h-h. . . .

Um-m-m-m-m. . . .

I work to spark a thought.

I'm blank. I'm empty. I'm toast.

This is the way I've been for the last two weeks. I haven't got any idea what I'm going to write. There's no topic, not a flicker of an idea. What *is* in my heart? What have I learned spiritually of late? What have I observed? How have I applied my love of Christ? How have I blessed or been blessed?

Silence.

“This is definitely not reflecting!” I say silently to myself. Am I separated

from God's love? No. This is still a strange place for me to be. After all, a little voice in my head argues, am I not “Ms. Conversation”, aka: “She-Who-Talks-With-Anyone-Anytime-About-Anything”?

Still silence. Deafening. Stark. Unwanted. Then comes an angel of a thought: *This isn't about me, it's about the desert.*

Suddenly, it's abundantly clear. I'm in a desert! Once I name the region, I see Christ. Gosh! It's still ever so quiet and there's not much to think or say or do. But Christ *is* present. Thank God. . .because nothing else seems to be...but I need nothing else.

Is not this silence the essence of the act of being still? I'm being. No thoughts. No pressures. No internal drive to do anything. I'm present. I'm open. I'm listening

And it's OK. After all, Lent is here and maybe this represents my classroom for the Lenten season. Easter will be my oasis. But for now, the desert is becoming more comfortable. The oasis will come, but I've much being and listening before I get there.

I wish you and yours a blessed Lenten journey. And if you journey into a desert, let's “be still” together.

*Cyndie*

## January Retreat Focuses on Ignatian Spirituality

by *Cyndie Ulrich*

Over 20 SacraMentors® gathered for the half-day retreat January 26<sup>th</sup> at St. Louise Parish, Bellevue. Contemplative prayer was the focus of the retreat. The session was ably facilitated by Tim Malone, M.Div, a spiritual director, speaker, and retreat leader from the Ignatian Spirituality Center in Seattle.

Malone's easy-going style was a blessing for us as he gently led us through a history of Catholic contemplative prayer. While there are many forms of prayer in our faith, it seems contemplative prayer is the type with which contemporary Catholics are most unfamiliar.

Contemplative prayer is grounded in many verses of

Scripture. One, in particular, is a verse with which SacraMentors® are very familiar: *Be still and know that I am God* (Psalm 46:10). Therefore, says Malone, the prayer method is thousands of years old. Since our intention in praying contemplatively is to gain closeness to God, there is nothing to fear about the prayer style.

Jesus himself went off on many occasions to pray in solitude to Our Father. “The Bible,” says Malone, “is filled with verses indicating our need to be alone and quiet in order to seek and find God.” One verse is found in Jeremiah: *Speak Lord, your servant is listening.* How can we be with God,” pondered Malone, “if

we're busy thinking and dealing with our mortal selves and our everyday, mortal responsibilities?”

Our desert fathers and mothers, St. John the Baptist, St. Benedict, St. Therese of Avila are several examples of “contemplatives.” During the first 1,600 years of our faith tradition, contemplative prayer was an accepted prayer practice.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, what we know today as the *Lectio Devina* was developed and practiced regularly. *Lectio Devina* is a meaningful way to deepen our relationship with the Holy Trinity through prayer, since contemplative prayer is a very monastic way to pray.

Malone suggested we begin in a relaxed seated position and

See “Retreat,” p. 6

## “Behold, I Make All Things New”

by Virginia Stone

I've been reflecting on a line of scripture since last Easter. It all started during the renewal of baptismal promises. Fr. Jim Lee had everyone look toward the East and say “I do” after each part of the Apostle’s Creed. While doing this, I noticed the Station of the Cross where Jesus meets his Mother, and I immediately thought of a scene from the film *The Passion of the Christ*, when Jesus told Mary, “*Mother, I make all things new.*” This is a slight variation of the reading from the book of Revelation when Jesus said, “*Behold, I make all things new.*”

It’s amazing to see how Jesus made things new to his apostles between the Last Supper and Pentecost. After Judas left the Upper Room during the Last Supper, Jesus gave his final teachings to his disciples, before leaving for the Garden of Gethsemane, (The Last Supper Discourses in John’s Gospel, Ch. 13 to Ch. 17). This was Jesus’ farewell address before his Passion.

In John Ch. 13, Jesus encouraged his apostles to love each other, to show that they were his disciples. Peter becomes concerned about Jesus leaving them, and promises to lay down his life for Jesus. Jesus then predicts Peter’s denial and that most of his apostles will abandon him. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus said, “*Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must*

*strengthen your brothers.*”

At the end of the Last Supper discourses (Ch. 17), Jesus prays to God because it was time for his Passion to begin. He asks his Father to glorify him so he can glorify his Father. The way to eternal life is to know God and Jesus. We see how God answered Jesus’ prayer and the conversion of St. Peter in the Gospels. It’s amazing how St. Peter went from denying Jesus during the Passion to so boldly proclaiming Jesus’ name after Pentecost just seven weeks later. What an incredible conversion! St. Peter’s speech, immediately after receiving the Holy Spirit, strengthened the apostles, as Jesus had predicted.

In John Ch. 17, Jesus also prayed for God to protect his disciples from the evil one and to consecrate them in the truth. Jesus followed this by praying for those who will believe in Jesus through his apostles’ teachings. He wants to share his glory with his followers, who are God’s gift to him. I am in awe whenever I read or hear this scripture because Jesus is praying for all the followers of his teachings, including you and me. Jesus loves us so much that he wants to share his glory with us, and considers us a gift to him.

This love is so awesome, because I seem to follow Jesus at a distance too often. I think teaching us how to love unconditionally is an important part of how Jesus makes everything new. He wants us to follow his commandments by loving one

another. The lives of many saints provide incredible examples of how to love, and what can be accomplished when people take up their cross and follow Jesus. St. Paul’s radical conversion provides a dramatic example of how Jesus can change a life. We know that Saul began persecuting Jesus, until he was shown that Jesus is real. Afterwards, as Paul, he learned about Jesus’ teachings from the apostles and went on to be an awesome missionary. St. Paul’s letters are an excellent example of how to be Catholic Christians. There is a passage from Romans 12:1-2 that is key for our own personal conversion: *I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.*

A traditional time of renewal is during Lent and Easter. We begin on Ash Wednesday by turning away from sin and being faithful to the Gospel. The Lenten season is focused on praying, almsgiving, fasting, and repentance. When we turn away from the ways of the world and try to follow God’s will, God can work through us just like he worked through the saints. Lent focuses on Jesus’ teachings and miracles. Holy Week focuses on the entry into Jerusalem, the

See “*All Things New,*” p. 8



“Jesus loves us so much that he wants to share his glory with us, and considers us a gift to him.”

~ Virginia Stone



visit our website  
[www.sacramentors.org](http://www.sacramentors.org)

## Joining with God's Children

by Frank Pease

**"It is our goal as SacraMentors to open all of our senses, everything we have available to us to join with God and our brothers."**

~ Book of Kindness II  
Day 25

I was delighted when a classmate in the Seattle U. SALT (Scripture And Leadership Training) program invited me to join her congregation, the Holy Temple Evangelistic Center in Seattle, for their weekly service.

Not knowing what to expect, but excited about the prospect of participating in a novel "ecumenical" worship experience, I figured this might be a calling to open my senses to something different liturgically, and to meet some children of God of a different faith tradition. So, Tu and I headed out on a rainy Sunday afternoon to attend the 2:00 p.m. program at HTEC.

And, what a service it was!

From the "get go", the service was interactive. The people were friendly and welcoming. When the preacher preached, the congregation echoed their sentiments right back from their hearts and voices to the pulpit. When the choir sang, the pew sitters spontaneously stood, as the Spirit moved them, to join the music's rhythm, body and soul.

As a congregant that day, I felt compelled to join the "sway", to do my share of clapping and singing. Sitting quietly in meditative

prayer and just "watching," as I sometimes do at my home church, did not seem appropriate. While I was not totally comfortable with this worship style (no cues to stand and sit), I felt that opening my senses to that experience couldn't hurt.

What I learned later to be a standard part of every service at this small HTEC congregation, (a seating capacity of 177 was posted on the church wall), was the solicitation of testimonies from the congregants to share extemporaneously the ways in which the Lord Jesus has worked in their lives.

It was touching to hear the experiences of a woman surviving three bouts of cancer, and those of an elderly man joining in the lively service after a recent surgical operation, and to hear them tell it from their hearts. How natural a way to teach of Jesus' work, through his people right there in the pews! Not hard to open my senses to that kind of sharing.

Also inspiring for a cradle Catholic like me to see, was the "altar call," where a young adult man and young adult woman, in separate moments, walked down the aisle from their pew to the pulpit, (again spontaneously), to greet the pastor and officially seek membership in that congregation, and to be anointed.

The pastor said tears always came to his eyes when these would-be members, approached the sanctuary. I

thought, *Could I publicly and spontaneously, make that kind of decision and "walk the walk" that these young folks did? Could that kind of bold step to another spiritual level in one's life be part of the Catholic worship experience? How did this compare to me being baptized a few weeks out of the womb?*

Well, Tu and I were physically drained, and our minds were reeling with new thoughts as we left HTEC that afternoon as the sunlight diminished, but the light of

our new view into this worship ship experience was still aflame. We opened our senses to something new, and joined with God's children whom we did not know, and were changed by it.

*Frank Pease is a SacraMentors® Board Member and Series instructor, and is a member of the Apostles' Group at St. Louise parish in Bellevue. He can be reached at [frank\\_pease@hotmail.com](mailto:frank_pease@hotmail.com).*

### *From the desk of Cyndie Ulrich*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As you know, we do all we can to keep SacraMentors operating costs at a minimum, but we need your help! This Lent, we ask for your financial assistance in the form of a donation or pledge during our 2008 Stewardship Campaign.

Please look for a personalized letter from Father Bob coming to you shortly outlining our plans for retreats, events, and Series offerings, and why your financial contribution is so important to the quality of these programs.

I hope you will join Father Bob, Lory, and the SacraMentors® Board in making a donation or pledge to SacraMentors this year.

Donations can be sent to: SacraMentors®, P.O. Box 64787, University Place, WA 98464.

We are happy to acknowledge your tax-deductible donation to SacraMentors in the Pentecost issue of Blessings.

Faithfully,

*Cyndie*

## Poetry Corner

by Kathleen Tolliver

**Lord,**

*I look out my window and the snow is grandiose. The trees stand tall against a clouded and blue sky. You made the snow and the landscape, Lord, and they are marvelous to behold.*

*I look inside my window and everything is covered with dust. The dirty dishes are piled high in the sink as the sun rises over them. The filthy laundry is piled high in the basement. There is no order and no beauty there. The entire house is full of disarray and clutter.*

*I think of my family and all the children. Some of them are speaking to me and some are not. Some know you Lord and some do not. Then I ponder my heart within. Parts of me worship you and parts of me are full of fear and unforgiveness.*

*Lord, if you can create the entire universe and make it beautiful, you can work a miracle in my home, my family and in my heart. I trust you and I praise you. I am sorry for the mess I have made of my family, my home and my heart.*

*I give them back to you. I praise you for what you can do for me. Thank you, Lord, for loving me so much that you would have suffered and died on the cross for me alone. Help me, Lord, to praise and thank you all the day long. Without you I am helpless.*

*Amen.*

## Recipe Corner: *Hot Cross Buns*

*If you've given up sweets for Lent, consider serving these delicious Hot Cross Buns for Easter!*

1/4 cup milk  
 1/3 cup sugar  
 3/4 teaspoon sugar  
 3/4 teaspoon salt  
 1/2 cup shortening  
 2 packages of active dry yeast  
 1/2 cup warm water  
 3 eggs  
 4 cups sifted flour  
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon  
 3/4 cup of currants  
 1 egg white  
 1 teaspoon cold water

- Scald milk in a small saucepan. Add sugar and shortening and cool till lukewarm
- Dissolve salt in the water
- Add eggs, yeast mixture, 1 cup flour, cinnamon, and mix
- Stir in currants and remaining flour
- Beat well to make a soft dough
- Place in lightly greased bowl
- Cover and let rise until just about doubled
- Roll dough into a 1/2 inch thickness
- Cut in rounds with a biscuit cutter or bottom of glass
- Pat the shapes to bun like shape and place on greased baking dish
- Allow to rise until almost doubled for an hour
- With a sharp knife cut a cross into the surface of each bun
- Brush tops with unbeaten egg white mixed with cold water
- Bake in a 375 degree oven for 15 minutes or until golden brown
- Cool on racks for about five minutes
- Fill in crosses with frosting made with 1 1/2 cups of sifted powdered sugar, 2 tbsp softened butter, 2 tbsp milk, and 1/2 tsp vanilla. Enjoy!



## IN STILLNESS,

Let us  
Release our  
Problems,  
Worries,  
Expectations  
And concerns  
from our minds  
and hearts,  
For these are the  
stumbling blocks  
We are here to  
overcome.

~ *Book of  
Blessings*



## Healing Mass

Father Bob Camuso

Celebrant and Homilist

Saturday, April 12, 2008

10:00 a.m. till Noon

Lunch to follow from Noon to 1:00 p.m.

St. Thomas More Parish

6511 176th SW, Lynnwood 98037

So that adequate food can be prepared for the Lunch,

please RSVP by April 9 to

Frank Pease, (425)562-8744 or [frank\\_pease@hotmail.com](mailto:frank_pease@hotmail.com)

### *"Ignatian Retreat" continued from page 2*

light a candle. Several deep breaths are a good way to detach ourselves from the everyday world and find that still and quiet place within. Only when we are calm and open can we be present to God.

The method used in *Lectio Divina* is to read a small portion of Scripture four different times. The first time is for the reading itself, for the discovery of the meaning of the Scripture; after the second reading, time is spent reflecting on the reading; after the third reading, time is spent in silent response to God, talking with Him from our hearts;

after the fourth reading, we are to relax and let our hearts steep, so to speak, in the grace and peace that come from the prayer.

Malone led retreatants in twenty minutes of contemplative prayer, and afterward asked us to journal our discoveries during the experience. I can share with you, my Brothers and Sisters, that I discovered a place in my heart where I hardly ever go in more "intellectual" prayer methods; a place I am free to show my frailties, confirm my epiphanies and honestly share my authentic "being" with God. I found it easy to reveal myself

completely to my Creator in safety and secrecy, with neither hesitation by my True Self nor interruption by my ego.

Many, many thanks to Tim Malone for blessing us so incredibly during this retreat. Thanks, too, to our SacraMentor<sup>®</sup> brother, Frank Pease, for organizing this wonderful event!

*Cyndie Ulrich is Executive Director of SacraMentors<sup>®</sup>, and can be reached at [executivedirector@sacramentors.org](mailto:executivedirector@sacramentors.org).*

*“Change,” continued from page 1*

despite our refusal to change. The change may be an early death. Anne Morrow Lindburgh wrote this about change: “There is no sin punished more by nature than the sin of resistance to change.”

Even though we may not like change or want change in our life, the reality is that so often the things we don’t want to change were once products of change. For example, your marriage you may not want to work on to change for the better was once a major change for you. If you are like most people before their wedding, you had a lot of concerns about the change from being single to being married, of losing your independence or of being stuck in a bad marriage. Again, if you are like most people, once the change happened, you found there was little reason for all your fear.

Our Church offers a program to help married couples who want to find more joy, more love in married life. The program is called *Marriage Encounter*. Many couples that participate in *Marriage Encounter* discover a deeper love than they ever thought they could have for their spouse. Still, there are couples that refuse to work on their marriage; they refuse to change, and as a result, change shows up when one spouse decides to leave the marriage.

Change is something most of us resist because we fear the unknown: “What will happen if my spouse and I talk about what troubles us in our marriage? My friends who did that ended

up in divorce.” Or, “What will happen if I risk leaving my job for a new career?” Or, “Will we have enough money to support another child in the family?” Or, “What will happen when I die?” Woody Allen said this about his fear of death: “It’s not that I’m afraid to die. I just don’t want to be around when it happens.”

What we also fear is not change, but what happens in between the old and the new. This is what some call “liminal space.” *Liminal* comes from the Latin, *limina*, which means “threshold.” Liminal space, then, is like standing on a threshold where we are neither here nor there; we’re betwixt and between. Stepping from the threshold of change is scary for most of us. We resist letting go of the old and coming to terms with the new. At the same time, most of us know this about ourselves: “Only I can change my life. No one else can do it for me.”

As we embrace this truth and the new reality brought on by change, so often we find that we like what we see. We discover that all the things we were afraid might happen, didn’t happen. And before long, we’re back on track again with a new attitude, a new purpose and a new life.

I invite you to take a moment now to call to mind a change you need to work on in your life. Maybe it’s a habit you have that’s not healthy or moral. Maybe you need to change a friendship that has become destructive. Maybe you need to change an attitude you

have, such as the victim attitude we talk about in the SacraMentors® program that keeps you in the blame and self-pity mode. Maybe you need to change that job that provides you with little support and too much stress.

If we want to change our lives for the better, or if we want to see change in the world, let us, as someone said, be the change we want to see. Let us become the person we want to be.

No one can change your life but you. It’s really true, whether you like it or not, no one else can change you but you. If you want change, it’s up to you to give your very best effort to make that happen. And then wait for God and trust God to do the rest.

*Fr. Bob*

*Father Bob Camuso is pastor at St. Thomas More parish in Lynnwood. He is co-founder of SacraMentors® and can be reached at bobc@stmp.org.*

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“Stepping from the threshold of change is scary for most of us. We resist letting go of the old and coming to terms with the new. At the same time, most of us know this about ourselves: “Only I can change my life. No one else can do it for me.”

~ Fr. Bob Camuso





“God,  
Give me work  
till my life  
shall end,  
and life  
till my  
work is done.”

~ Winifred Holtby



*“All Things New” continued from page 3*

betrayal by Judas (and Peter), and the Passion. It’s interesting how the Easter readings during daily and Sunday Masses focus on not only the Resurrection and Pentecost, but also on Jesus’ farewell address to his disciples and how his apostles carried on his mission through them, as we hear in Acts. This message is not only for the apostles and the early church, but for us, too. Jesus wants us to share his teachings with others just as the apostles accomplished after Pentecost, so we can be his instruments to help him lead others to eternal life.

It may seem impossible to really follow Jesus and share the good news by the way that we live. The Apostles were forgiven for their mistakes. Recall last year’s Gospel from the Third Sunday of Easter, when Jesus asked St. Peter three times if he loved him. If Jesus can forgive St. Peter, he can forgive us too...if we only ask. This is what is so awesome about reconciliation. Receiving the Sacraments of Eucharist and Penance are excellent ways to help us become closer to Jesus and become more open to God’s will.

In John Ch. 14, Jesus let his apostles know that they can’t go where he is going, but promises to come back for them later. He encourages them to have faith in God, and in him. Jesus then teaches them to pray in his name and that he will send the Holy Spirit to be with them. I think I am better off following this

teaching when I’m dealing with challenging times. In other words, when the going gets tough, it’s time to turn to Jesus. In the film *The Passion of the Christ*, Jesus received a boost of strength several times when he looked at Mary. If we want Jesus to make things new for us, all it takes is to follow him by unconditionally loving people around us and do our best to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel.

Since my conversion in 2001, I’ve often read and reflected upon the Last Supper discourses. In May of that year, I remember pondering the deeper meaning of these chapters. It was incredible how a prayer that I had never heard before

started going through my head. I think it has several elements of what it takes for Jesus to really make things new. Here is the prayer...

*Lord Jesus Christ, Open up my heart so I may better hear the message from the Advocate. May the Holy Spirit breathe on me and help me avoid the temptation of sin, follow the commandments, and love others as you love me. Remain in me as I remain in you, for you are the vine and I am one of many branches. May the Holy Spirit help me bear fruit, thereby glorifying our Father’s name. Amen.*

*Virginia Stone is a member of the SacraMentors® Apostle Group at St. Michael Parish in Olympia.*

**Jesus, speak to my condition  
and change me  
somewhere inside  
where it matters,  
a change that will burn  
and tremble  
and heal  
and explode me into tears  
or laughter  
or love that throbs  
or screams  
or keeps a terrible  
cleansing silence.  
Let something  
happen in me  
which is  
my real self.**



*“Lurching Towards Holiness” continued from page 1*

them said, “Get up! Do not be afraid.” When they looked up they did not see anyone but Jesus. Like Peter, with joy, I want to pitch a tent and stay in that place of deeper insight, wrapped in clouds of grace. I also proclaim “Lord it is good to be here”. And invariably I trip and find myself face down and fearful, waiting for Jesus to tell me to “Get up! Do not be afraid.” I forget to look up, to see no one but Jesus.

Ash Wednesday is upon me and I am still pondering lessons of Christmas and how I seem so inclined to take two steps forward in my spiritual growth and then one step backwards. It always surprises me. My only consolation is that I seem to be moving forward incrementally. For Christmas, in heartfelt letters to my family, I assured each of them that as long as we have each other, nothing else matters. The problems and stresses of daily life are incidental. God has never failed us. I remember the abiding peace on Christmas Day and how I wanted to pitch my “Transfiguration tent” and stay in that place. After Christmas I embraced the illogical fear that maybe everything else **does** matter, maybe God **could** fail me and what a fake I was to ever put those words on paper. (You may notice a pattern here). I believed the lie. Maybe everyone has their own private lie that attacks when they are tired or stressed or worried or doing grief work or taking baby steps spiritually. Mine is that I am unworthy, useless, not important enough.

I felt awash in feelings unbidden, an ocean of tears. Foolishly I fought it for a while, but like swimming, the

more you struggle the more you sink. So rather than abide in panic, I decided to watch the emotions emerge, observe and recognize the pattern and quietly ride it out. OK, not so quietly too. I choose to thank God for the lessons I am learning. It could have been a pit. It is, in fact, the pits. I don’t like the crying surrounding loss...it somehow affronts me that even though I know what to expect, it still rolls over me. I am recognizing it as a desert between those peaks (and peeks) of understanding. I am learning how to navigate the terrain between the desert and the Transfiguration. That’s where most of my growth takes place. The yearning to see God’s face is my journey. And so it is good.

I ponder this Lent, wondering what I might learn, remembering the lessons of last year, still teetering on the edge of loss. My mother died the Friday after Ash Wednesday. In walking her home to heaven, I had already experienced the Way of the Cross. Calvary was intimately clear to me. I spent the rest of the season in resurrection mode. I knew pain of standing at the foot of the cross as well as the joy and wonder and unexpected peace of resurrection. Later, that Good Friday, the Stations of the Cross were literally and figuratively a hike up a mountain, stopping to catch our breath as we read, missing words because some of us needed reading glasses. In spite of us, it was holy. I will never forget it. I am being reminded that I don’t have to do it well, only be willing to walk the journey. The grace is for the asking. Only sometimes I am afraid to ask, or I forget – too

caught up in the incidentals. I forget to look up, to see no one but Jesus.

Advent and Lent seem to be part of the same season, a question and an answer. During Advent we are called to be still as we wait for the birth of Jesus, pondering what gifts we have been given. We are reminded that Christmas isn’t so much a day or event but a way of life, a choice, a mindset, to strive to see the Christ Child in everyone. Lent is for examining what we need to let go of, what we own and what owns us. Poet Mary Oliver tells us: *To live in this world you must be able to do three things: to love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it; and, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go.* (In Blackwater Woods) Oh, the letting go is so hard sometimes.

Maybe “ordinary time” is for putting all these things into practice. Perhaps our dance isn’t so much two steps forward and one back. Maybe it’s a stumbling, clumsy lurch towards holiness. We hear God’s voice, revealing Jesus to us. And then we trip and fall forward on the ground, overcome with fear. And we wait for Jesus to lay His hand on us and tell us to “Get up! Do not be afraid”. We need to remember to look up, to see no one but Jesus, then get up and follow Him. The yearning to see God’s face is our journey. We are called see it in each other. And so it is good.

*Mary Anne Reynolds has served the organization as a Board member and training series instructor, and is a regular contributor to “Blessings.”*

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Oh, the letting go is so hard sometimes.”

~ Mary Anne Reynolds

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into Your  
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~ Luke 23:42



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