

Good Friday Devotional Reflection

The Rev. Erin Morey '22



John 19:38-42

38 After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. 39 Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. 40 They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. 42 And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Reflection

Last year, during Holy Week, my pet rabbit Lilly developed an infection that led to severe neurological symptoms. She was unable to eat or drink, so I developed a routine of syringe-feeding her and giving her subcutaneous fluids several times a day. I was heartbroken to watch her life slip away while simultaneously doing my best at work to prepare for the beautiful liturgies of Holy Week and Easter. I also felt guilty that this care might distract me from having a meaningful Lenten practice.

One afternoon, as I was feeding Lilly on my lunch break, she gently licked my fingers, and I felt more connected to her than I ever had. I realized then that the rhythm of caring for my dying pet had become a meaningful spiritual practice, and I treasured this time with her. When she finally died, I realized how much I missed this time, caring for her, and truly being with her.

As a clergy person, I spend a great deal of time caring for people who are dying and who have died, as well as the people who love them. I have also lost people I love to death. I still don't know whether death is a normal part of life or a terrible violation of God's will for this world. What I do know is that, eventually, all life dies, and grief is hard. I have watched people care for their dying loved ones and witnessed love that is profound and sacred.

It is tempting, I think, to run from death, and to avoid being present with sickness, suffering, and death—including our own! How astonishing that our God became vulnerable, and not only died, but allowed others to care for Him when he did.

Prayer

God of love, help us never to lose sight of the promise of Easter and resurrection. And when we inevitably find ourselves at the cross and tomb, let us respond not with avoidance, but with care and compassion. Amen.