

**Good Friday Reflection**  
**April 19, 2019**  
**by Sr. Lynn Schafer**

For six weeks we have been considering and acting upon what does it mean for us to Live A Way of Love. Today as we pause to allow the story of Jesus death to touch our hearts again, It leaves our hearts sober. We are faced with the stark reality that if we truly want to Live A Way of Love it involves dying, many levels of dying, that possibly will cost us our lives. Isn't this what Jesus said to us in the scriptures: anyone who loses her life, his life for my sake, will find it? Isn't committing ourselves to Living a Way of Love meant to bring us toward finding ourselves and each other?

In many ways, this day, is about what Jesus was born for, stood for, lived for and ultimately died for. It was his moment of stamping his life of Love with his FIAT, his Yes. His life was a journey of the heart that was torn wide open in Love and poured out with great generosity. Jesus life was lived for love, in love and through love, for ALL humanity, all Creation. Through Jesus life and death, we get to know better who we are and to what Jesus is pointing, what is ETERNAL and NOW. In truth, Jesus leads us in the direction of our own souls.

The God of the New Testament that Jesus shared with us was/is a God who is love and who loves his creation deeply; all of it, loves it despite its violent ways; despite its ability to be the cause of suffering; despite its lack of understanding about what it truly means to be children of God, to be loved.

As Jesus said so clearly with his dying breath, in his prayer to his ABBA: "forgive them for they know not what they do." I would also imagine Jesus thinking "forgive them for they do not know who they are, made in our image and likeness.

In his new book, *The Universal Christ*, Richard Rohr brings home to me what he so powerfully proclaims: Christ is another name for everything. Everything is in Christ and Christ, is in every thing. There is only one suffering, and it is the suffering of God. There is only one love, and it is God's love.

Christ did not come to take away our suffering but to walk with us in compassion and companionship and assure us that we are never alone. God waits for us, to find God there, in our humanness and suffering.

Christ came to give us hope and nourishment that would sustain us throughout our human life and our growing in living a way of love. Our human journey, is most certainly, a process and a coming home to our authentic and truest selves, in Christ.

Cynthia Bourgeault, a teacher of centering prayer and author of several books states "we need to heal the false self, and address the shadow parts of ourselves, the wounds of our personal life, in order to be free and generous in giving our hearts in Love. To practice this love is to have the mind of Christ. This will be transformative and if we let it, can change the world.

We must make no mistake the pain we do not let be transformed, we will transmit, consciously or unconsciously."

This way of living in love is a Journey rooted in the heart of God. As St. Paul says, it is With Christ, In Christ, and Through Christ, that we live and move and have our Being. No other place. No other way. Our suffering is the suffering of believing we live outside of God instead of within the very heart of God. This is what faith calls us to and to which hope carries us through. There is nothing that can separate us from God, nothing.

One of the ways that Franciscan spirituality differs from traditional theology is this: We have trusted since the time of John Don Scotus, a 12<sup>th</sup> century theologian, that Jesus came not to redeem because of sin or atonement but rather for at-one-ment. For this is what love does.

Scotus believed that even if humans had not sinned Christ would still have come, since this was predetermined from all eternity in the mind of God as the supreme manifestation of God's love for the creation that God brings about, in God's free act. The incarnation is the effect of God freely choosing to end God's self-isolation and show who, and what, God is, to that creation.

This theology is affirmed in the tradition of St. Francis and how he lived his life. It is utterly a simple theology: God is love and all that has been, is, and ever will be, is because God is love and is among us, in Christ, who is ever present.

Truly to Live the Way of Love, is for us to grow in knowing and embracing this total and complete enfoldment of the Christ, in us.

For some of us, This may be difficult to accept. We have been conditioned by a theology since the 10<sup>th</sup> century that had sin as the focal point for Jesus Incarnation, death and our redemption. We were taught as young children that it was all about staying pure and free of sin. To stay connected to God could only happen through this clean slate of a soul that would get us to heaven some day, if we were lucky. I would imagine many of us are still trying to heal from this wounding and the nightmares that we embodied through the fear and guilt this theology instilled in us about who God was. Sadly, this theology is still being taught our children.

On this Good Friday, we stand before the cross and are called to reflect on and consider how is Jesus, the Christ still being nailed to a cross, treated unjustly, physically tortured, abused, not accepted, not welcomed? The cross is crying out to us to recognize and know who we are and who the other is, in Christ. Who are we truly called to see and venerate before the cross today in our Good Friday service?

At the end of March I attended the International Quilt Festival at the Rosemont. In my meandering I came across a quilt that was entitled "Jesus Wept." This quilt was a picture of a stained glass window with the figure of Jesus in it and faces of children.

The artist's description of the quilt read: I was six years old on September 15, 1963, when white supremacists set off 15 sticks of dynamite beneath the entryway of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Twenty-six children were in the basement preparing for the Youth Sunday sermon entitled. "the love that forgives." Four girls were killed instantly by the blast. The stained glass window of Christ remained except for His face.

I was deeply moved as I stood before this artist's quilt and story of this tragic day in her life as a young girl. Where was Christ? The weeping Christ? The face of Christ wasn't in the stained glass window. Christ was there in the basement with this child and all the children who were part of the violence and tragedy that took place that day in Alabama.

Christ continues to be with all of our children, with those today, who have faced the same violence in our churches, mosques, theaters, schools, our borders, our streets. Sadly, this is the reality in our world. A reality, that more than ever, calls us to awaken to who we are in the heart of God, in Christ. Let us encourage and support each other to wake more and more. To recognize when we have fallen back to sleep. Only awake and together can we stand up to the violence and bloodshed that still goes on.

YES. Let us look today toward the cross, and in awe, honor this sacred life, this LOVE.

Let us look up and into each others eyes, into every face, and gaze at every creature, at our Mother Earth, and see the Christ. May we be moved to take up our cross, the cross of love, everyday, for the good of our wounded world.

This is a Good Friday, a Friday where love prevailed and where we are shown the way we can transform our world and ourselves. Will you offer yourself to this journey?