

Karen Hollis | March 21, 2021
Psalm 119: 9-16 | John 12:20-33
Lent 5 – Living Faith

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be reflections of your word to us today, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen

An absolute tragedy happened on our island this week. The tragic passing of these men has left many of us breathless and silent, with an open wound that lingers. We ask why, we wonder, we demand some kind of explanation from God. How could this happen? We feel frozen, angry, overcome with grief. Life stops in a way . . . nothing feels quite as important as this, or maybe grief just puts a cloud around everything else and demands our focus.

These deaths remind us of others we've lost in the past year, in the past few years. They remind us of important losses in our lives . . . even the loss of Jesus as we have Good Friday clearly in our sights. They remind us how precious and fragile life is. Death is a part of life . . . it is so often impossible to understand, thus so difficult to come to terms with.

Years ago, I met Fr. Jack Sprule who at the time was the priest at St. Peter's in Nanaimo. While he was speaking, he told the story of a widow who came to him furious with God after her spouse's death. During their conversation Fr. Jack took her into the sanctuary and up on the chancel before the altar. He gave her a foam bat and invited her to use it on the altar . . . and she did. It was Fr. Jack's way of saying 'God is big enough for your anger and your grief. God is big enough to absorb your feelings and love you even while you express them.' As Jesus shows us on the cross, there isn't anything we can do to God or express to God that will push God away, just the opposite . . . God draws us in and embraces us with our limited understanding and limited ability to cope with the stuff of life . . . God knows what it is to be human. God knows human grief and weeps with us, like when Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Grief is real.

This business of a living faith, when we get right down to it, is about relationship. A relationship that grows and changes over time, that distances and deepens depending on the season. A relationship that can weather the toughest storms and is only stronger because of them. God embraces us no matter what we bring . . . as the resurrected Christ, he draws all people to himself in one grand gesture of love that is more

fundamental than death or grief or anger or confusion or any impediment we can put between us and God. Christ draws us in and loves us. It's as simple as that.