

Spring is a time of change. Driving down, I was watching the geese flying over (north and south). In the past few weeks, we have watched the grass growing and snow (still!) falling. I was listening on the radio about the show “13 reasons”, which is a series on Netflix that I've decided I don't want to watch – I was listening to a Suicide counsellor saying “the broadcasters have guidelines as to how to show and refer to suicide in movies and television shows – and this show breaks pretty well every guideline. Suicide is not to be glamorized, romanticized, or celebrated in any way.”

My mother, after living with dementia for the past few years, is dying. Friday night I zipped down so I could see her in Camrose, and came back up Saturday morning. It is probably the last time I shall see her in the flesh.

The geese are on a journey. Those people who would contemplate suicide are on a journey, a very tough spot on the journey. My mother is on a journey, a journey of leaving this world and going to the perfect one. I hope its quick and I hope its painless, because she will be so much happier with Jesus in heaven than I think she is here presently on earth. Mum, go in peace and with all my love.

Our lives are a journey – a journey of discovery, of learning, of life. God's life is a journey, a journey of striving to walk with us, His loved people. It seems, not for the first time in history, that society is walking away from God, that people are deciding their own path of what is good and evil – and the consequences are scary.

In the first reading, Peter is talking to people who are dead to God. He tells them: “save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” Unfortunately, our current generation is just as corrupt as Peter's was. And people are just as dead as in Peter's time. But as we know, our God is a God of good surprises – and He *wants* to bring the dead to life. Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."

In our journey of life, we all make mistakes – some worse than others, but no matter how small or large, we all make mistakes – and Peter says “Repent; be forgiven; receive the Holy Spirit.” This promise is for all. Walk in love. Stop being dead, and come alive again, as you were originally created to be.

As Peter writes to us later:

“You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.

Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Love one another deeply from the heart. *You have been born anew* through the living and enduring word of God.” You are born anew. You are no longer dead, but alive. Love one another, deeply.

Just like the two people on the road to Emmaus, we often do not recognize Jesus even though He walks with us. Just like them, we need Him to interpret for us what is happening, and what it means. How many times have we lurched forward with broken hearts? In our pain and lost hopes we find it hard to recognize God, even if He is sitting with us. But, it is His way to come when the storm is peaking or when fear is deepest or when hope is gone. There wasn't a resurrection without the cross. There wasn't

freedom without Jesus' obedience in the Garden of Gethsemane. There wasn't an Easter without Good Friday. In the pain and sacrifice and being lost, God incarnates His power and love in the Son of God, when we least expect it.

“While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” They did not recognize their friend, even though just a few days before they had sat with Him.

Jesus is not sympathetic, but bursts with impatience at their misunderstanding and grief, and hotly argues that His crucifixion is necessary and good, and to be celebrated along with His resurrection.

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. He had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

We need to have the meaning of our events shown to us by the Holy Spirit, just like they did. We need to understand, sometimes, with intense emotion, the meaning of what God is doing. And finally, we need to recognize Him – He is made known to us in the breaking of His body for us.

My Mum is dying physically, but not in truth. In truth, she is continuing her walk with Jesus – and I earnestly look forward to being with her and Him in the future – in fact, being with all who I love, including all of you and Him, all of us together. Her next step is a frightfully scary one, and it is one that all of us will take. But this is necessary and good, and to be celebrated – in recognition of love, of life with God. If I did not believe that, I think Jesus would burst with impatience at my hypocrisy and blindness.

People contemplating Suicide are knowing they are dead spiritually, and contemplating total death. This is terrifying, and empty, and lost, terrible. But the next step is to take a step towards life, not death. Do not kill yourself. Rather, become alive.

When your life is scary, when all is hard, when you have lost hope – look towards Jesus, look towards the cross – and you will see God. In the crack between heaven and earth, you will see God – you too can be surprised and blessed by the God who rarely appears where, when, or how we imagine it. The One who loves, who heals, who brings you home. Repent, be forgiven, receive the Holy Spirit. Receive love.

Tell Jesus all your woes, all your hurts and pains, all your sorrows – and leave them with Him. Tell Jesus all your wrongs, your insults, your lies, your little murders, your little lusts – and leave them with Him. Our journey is not to walk in the darkness. Our journey is not to walk between dark and light. Our journey is to live in the light. Living in the light, your eyes are opened, and you recognize Him, and you walk with Him. He will take your woes and sorrows, He will take your guilt and sin – and wash you clean.

If you find someone in pain, in need, in distress – comfort them. Share Christ's love with them. Remind them that they are loved – in fact, serve them with the power of Christ. Speak to them the words of Christ. Love them with the love of Christ.

My Mum is dying, yes – but in Jesus she has eternal life. All of us actually were dying or in danger of dying – but in Jesus we have eternal life. I pray that your eyes are opened, that you see Jesus and walk

with Him, and know His joy in you. Let your life reflect that joy, so all who meet you, meet Jesus; for you have been born anew through the living and enduring word of God. In His resurrection is our resurrection. Walk in the light.

Amen.