

He is a big man, to stand beside him is to know the reality of his stature, his tallness. He is a strong man, to feel the strength, his hold on your hand, is to feel without question, a spiritual conduit, like a gentle shot of electricity running through, one that takes your breath away. He is a compassionate man. You can sense it, in his look, his presence, his vulnerability, a welcoming that surrounds him....soft eyes, warm arms. He is a man many of you know and I had the honour, along with Austin to be there when he was installed as Dean of Az. Father Tom is all of those things and he is on a mission from God, to shake up this deanery. Are you ready, because he might be coming? coming, to lead? I hope so. to raise up? Maybe. to help us stop serving ourselves? There's a thought. To ignite a fire under our church planting mission? There's a miracle. Maybe, but like Jesus' humble entrance into Jerusalem, he will probably come not with power, and not with might, but with something much more effective.

In today's dramatic reading there is a very short but effective jump from Christ's triumphant entree to the King on the Cross; there is an unbelievable quick transition from 'Hosanna in the highest' to Crucify Him! I believe that we need to enter into the that change, really enter into it....because it is our sin, yours and mine that crucified the Christ we love. A resurrection without that reality is a cheap one. Satan would like to 'dumb down' our part, have us glance over our own ugliness. God would like us to embrace our sin, humbly and prayerfully, Only then can we truly worship and serve God as he wants. Only then can we emulate a Christ-like compassion. Are you ready?

I don't know if I was really ready for what I call "my survival lesson". I accepted an invitation to help a co-worker prepare her 50 chickens for the freezer. As a city girl, I thought I had better go and learn all about food prep in case I was stranded in the wilderness with out the convenience of a Walmart. I took my then, 9 year old hyper-active son and my 3 year old precocious daughter. It was to be a family affair. We along with 12 others set up an assembly line: 1. catch em, chop off the head and feet, & de-gut em; 2. dip them in hot wax, & pull off the feathers. 4. clean em up & bag them. Sounds efficient, but the experience as I remember it was not a clean antiseptic one. I was the feather -puller -outer. The smell was overwhelming, lingering in your nose for days after. The squawking was loud, heralding the act of a swift, quick death. You could feel the air full of fear and confusion of what was happening. My son loved all the excitement, the fellowship, the busy-ness and all the twitching bodies! My young sensitive daughter, who was let loose to wander had another take on the event. After a time she came up to me, tugged on my clothes to get my attention and looking somewhat confused she said" Mommy, MommyI don't think the chickens like this!". I was dumb founded, didn't expect it and I don't remember my response....but I have never forgotten her words....I don't think the chickens like this.

I think Tanya's insight was evidence of her growing compassion, the ability to see from another's perspective. She was not involved in the act of killing herself but she knew in her young heart that something was not as it should be and she did what she felt comfortable doing. She shared her thoughts with the one she trusted, her mom. There was a lot of silence on our way home. None of us eat chicken for a while, the smell of thick sticky blood eventually became a memory, the scratchy fearful squawking in our ears forgotten, but Tanya's words are still as fresh as ever, she may not have been able to comprehend the big 'survival' picture, she may have felt somewhat on the outside...no job for her just watch and don't get in the way, but her ability to sense the wrongness I think was pretty profound for a three year old, her words her innocent perspective, caused me to wonder....

It is a profound thing to realize that the crucifixion event, the quintessential moment that changed our Christian lives, and the world, the one that was for-told and re-told..over and over again is still not known by some, shunned by lots. It is interesting to me that in Jesus last days

on earth he kept predicting his death. I also noted that Jesus prepared the steps of his crucifixion event, timing and preparing it perfectly, delegating what had to be donego into town and get a donkey, go into town and find a room. Not any donkey or any room but a particular one, one that is ready to be used for Kingdom purposes. Do you ever think what else, Jesus for-knew,....Before the cock crows you will deny me three times Peter, one of you will even betray me this night (You know who you are Judas). If Jesus knew what Peter and Judas would do and say, do you think he would know their internal strife when the violence started? Would he know, deep in his spirit, the tears of regret that Peter would shed. The man he loved, the rock of his church, the head strong, outspoken, one. Would he know the turmoil of Judas, his internal struggles, his bad decisions that would put a rope around his neck. I would suggest that In the crucifixion event such insight would be as fresh and piercing as the nails in his hands and feet. Those of us that have sat at the bed of a dying loved one know this. Suffering has a ricocheting attribute, a contagious pain, a brotherhood of suffering that cries out from the cross: "I am suffering Yes, and I see you suffering right now, and I don't know what is worse! ". It is compassion of the highest order when spirit reaches out to spirit. It is a moment of deep caring, the dying and the watching, the coming together. The watching ones say in their heart, I am here, you are not alone, I love you, really love you, I am not going anywhere, as hard as it gets, I am not leaving, I am with you in your dying, til the very end!

Jesus' last words, at the end of His earthly life, are to His Father, "ELOI, ELOI, LEMA SABACHTHANI." He remembered Psalm 22, My God, My God why have you forsaken me? forsaken us all? forsaken those watching? The near ones, the distant ones, the unbelieving ones, the lost ones?. Never the self centred one, Jesus was always 'other centred', sensing the will of His father in one hand and holding the pain of the world in his other, always praying for a particular kind of connection, one that would bring the two together, one that would ignite a compassion and a love, that would create a conduit for His kingdom building purpose.

Today, we are part of Christ's kingdom building purpose, we are the hands of Christ in a hurting world. Today, we have re-enacted in word, Christ's crucifixion. Are the words, just ink scribbled on paper? A story of long ago, a good story when you think of heaven but how does Christ's dying impact your life today. Maybe you are not really ready for a lesson on compassion? Authentic compassion comes easily to those who experience the same pain. Cancer survivors have a way of relating to those with Cancer. On the other hand compassion can die a quick death in the face of self righteousness. There was no compassion in those who judged, sentenced and crucified Christ. Lack of compassion breaks my heart and I am sure Jesus feels the same way.

When I saw her my heart broke, she held a towel to her eye gently crying, a woman stooped over in her wheel chair, a broken spirit encased by a body deteriorating moment by moment. A worn well read bible on her table. A daughter, looking dejected, sorrowful. What else can one do when you are watching your loved one suffer? We walked in bringing the body and blood of the living Lord, on many levels, and as we did, I thanked the Lord, for all he is and does through our ministry together. We got over the awkwardness, moved away the dirty left over lunch dishes and set up a place for communion. We said the words together, confessed our sins together and praised the Lord together.....despite the pain and the noise of bells ringing and the constant going back and forth in the halls, we remembered Christ and that brought us hope. In the silence of the drive home I thought about her, asking God, how long must she suffer, help her Lord! I kept hearing her words of thanks.....she thanked me! and I was humbled by her words and I remembered her in my prayers.

Jesus remembers all those who re-experience his crucifixion, who remember and enter into his dying, and who celebrate his resurrection....will we remember and make Christ visible to a hurting world. Such action is called mission and the building blocks of an effective mission is compassion.... a Christ-like heart that yearns to help others know His love. Unless the

compassion of Christ becomes a reality in your spirit your action will be fruit-less. If you enter the mission field with out Christ's heart, you will be like a card-board Christian: no strength to hold the heavy stuff. You may look good, seem functional, have a secular do-good purpose but when the rain of change comes you will disintegrate, fold in on yourself. You will think about your lack of resources instead of the proven abundant provision of God. You will speak of your lack of skill, inability to pray out loud, uncomfortable-ness in the presence of pain, the smell of blood and urine, the fear of being pulled in, judged, the discomfort of the crowd gone crazy, and the visual impact of an innocent man crucified. All those thoughts will push you on the edge of non action, on the path away from the most important event in the creation of the world. The choice is completely and eternally yours. If you fear vulnerability, if you shy away from deep connections of the soul you will fade away. You will hide your emotions, hide your own weakness and stand with a handkerchief over your nose and your eyes shut tight and the evil one will comfort you. I would suggest that that is not the way of Christ and it is not the way of CTR. We are born to be a resurrection people! Why then are we reluctant to let Christ surprise this body, not with his power....which he has lots of, not with his might.....which he can display mightily, but with His spirit!

I used to tell the teenage convicts in the youth detention centre, that if they were the only person in this world that Jesus would climb up on the cross and die for them. That usually got their attention. My goal however was to get them running to Christ, instead of past him. They all thought they were the garbage of their world, unworthy, unwanted, undeserving of anyone's attention. It was easy to see because they lived a life, that screamed all those things. It was their reality. I used to think that I had heard all the horrific stories of neglect but then the unbelievable would curse my ears. What do you say to a ten year old that is sent to service a man so that mom can have drug money? How do you comfort a teen murderer who never had a home, who lived from couch to couch, from relative to relative, always wanting love but only getting the dregs? Only Jesus can confront such disfunction and guess what ? You are the crucified-resurrected Christ, you are his scared hands and feet. You are the channel for Christ's love and He is calling you on a mission. Are you ready? He is here!

He was not a big man, my Jesus, not like Saul certainly not like Goliath. He was not a handsome man my Yeshua, not like David. He was not known for his outstanding ability to carry heavy timbers for his carpentry trade. His strength was not so much physical as it was spiritual. His power is like that of an army and he commands a unique kind of obedience, a following that is hard to understand. He has the ability to touch the source of one's unwholeness and to make it right. One touch and the sick got up out of their bed and served Him. One word and the demons ran. One prayer and the dead came out of the grave. The son of man, as He called himself, oozed compassion, and in that capacity, He search out the broken, the lame, the forgotten. The saviour of my world has a way of seeing, a way of knowing, a way of loving. He does not like the desperate cries of a mother's heart. He does not like the hard hearted denial of those who live on the street. He does not like the babies who grow up without knowing Him. This is why He came. This is why he died and this is why he conquered sin and death. Hard to comprehend and yet His way beckons to every open soul, saying: Remember me. Come to me. Be me! My Jesus, your Jesus, was and is on a mission from God, to shake up his church and who is the church? We are, are you ready? because he is here right now. If we come into the front line spiritual skirmish, humbly, putting down our ego driven weapons I believe we will experience a new freedom. If we prayerfully, put away our own needs behind that of God's, I believe He will honour the intention of our hearts. If we come purposefully before God wanting only to please Him, not clinging to the past; I believe that He will fill our emptiness with his spirit. If we come without our agendas, only seeking his will, I believe that God will throw open the door of possibilities. If we come prepared to worship and serve God as he wants, not as we want I believe that the impossible will happen. Let us pray