

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER - B - MAY 3, 2015

JESUS SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES: I AM THE TRUE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. WHOEVER REMAINS IN ME AND I IN HIM WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT.....

ALONG A SIMILAR LINE, PAULA D'ARCY, A SPIRITUAL WRITER AND SPEAKER WRITES: "GOD COMES TO US DISGUISED AS OUR LIVES" AND FOR HER IT IS CERTAINLY NOT A GLIB STATEMENT -

PAULA WAS 25 YRS OLD IN JANUARY OF 1973 WHEN SHE MARRIED ROY D'ARCY....

TEN MONTHS LATER SHE GAVE BIRTH TO HER DAUGHTER, SARAH....

EVERYTHING WAS GOING ALONG FINE...

IN JUNE OF 1975 SHE LEARNED THAT SHE WAS PREGNANT ONCE MORE...

SO TWO MONTHS LATER IN AUGUST, A PREGNANT PAULA, HER HUSBAND, ROY AND THEIR DAUGHTER, SARAH LEFT THEIR HOME IN CONNECTICUT TO TRAVEL TO MASSACHUSETTS AND SHARE THE EXCITEMENT OF THEIR SECOND PREGNANCY WITH HER PARENTS....

ON THE RETURN TRIP TO THEIR CONNECTICUT HOME ON AUGUST 18, 1975

THEIR CAR WAS STRUCK BY A DRUNKEN MOTORIST WHO CAREENED ACROSS A DIVIDED INTERSTATE HIGHWAY AT 97 MILES PER HOUR....

THEIR ONE AND A HALF YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, SARAH, DIED ON AUGUST 20TH OF HEAD INJURIES

AND HER HUSBAND, ROY, DIED THREE DAYS LATER FROM A RUPTURED SPLEEN....

*PAULA WAS 27 YRS OLD, 3 MONTHS PREGANANT, MIRACULOUSLY ALIVE -
BUT AS SHE WRITES - SHATTERED BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION....*

SHE WISHED THAT SHE TOO HAD DIED....

*A LONG JOURNEY OF GRIEF WOULD CONSUME THE AGONIZING YEARS
WHICH FOLLOWED....*

*ON MARCH 20, 1976 - 7 MONTHS AFTER THE ACCIDENT - SHE GAVE BIRTH
TO HER SECOND DAUGHTER, BETH.*

*FOR THE SAKE OF THAT CHILD PAULA FOUGHT HER WAY BACK TO
SANITY - FILLED WITH QUESTIONS, FEARS AND DISILLUSIONMENT
ABOUT LIFE.....*

*HER GREAAATEST QUESTION WAS, OF COURSE: HOW COULD A LOVING
GOD LET THIS HAPPEN?*

*SHE GOES ON IN HER JOURNAL FOR DECEMBER, 1975 - WHICH IS PART OF
HER BOOK, "THE GIFT OF THE RED BIRD"*

IN THIS ABYSS I AM LEARNING WHAT IT MEANS TO REALLY PRAY...

"GOD, IF YOU ARE REALLY OUT THERE, HELP ME. LET ME FIND YOU."

*...I SCREAM, WHY? FOR MONTHS I HAVE SCREAMED, WHY? I ONLY STOP
ASKING WHY WHEN I SLEEP....*

THEN I FEEL A PRESENCE NEXT TO ME, DOWN HERE IN THE ABYSS....

I AM NOT ALONE.....

IT'S AS IF SOMEONE IS SAYING TO ME LOOK. USE YOUR EYES....

*AND SO OUT OF MY DEPTHS I BEGIN TO LOOK INTO PEOPLE'S EYES FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, AND I AM STARTLED BY WHAT I SEE...*

SO MANY PEOPLE ARE UNHAPPY...

MANY ARE BITTER.....MANY LOOK WITHOUT SEEING...

THAT HAS BEEN ME....

I AM LOOKING IN A MIRROR....

BUT SOME EYES ARE DIFFERENT...

***THEY ARE FILLED WITH A CERTAIN LIGHT, AND IT DRAWS ME LIKE A
LASER.***

I WANT IT...

SLICED OPEN, UNABLE TO BE FOOLED, I SEE THAT THE LIGHT IS GOOD.

HOW DID THEY GET IT? I NEED TO KNOW.....

I BEGIN TO SEE SOMETHING ELSE...

THE PEOPLE WITH THE BITTER, UNSEEING EYES AVOID MY PAIN...

THEY ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH IT.....WITH ME....

***THEY WANT ME TO BE MYSELF AGAIN AND TO STOP REMINDING THEM
THAT LIFE IS TREACHEROUS.***

***BUT THE PEOPLE WITH THE LIGHT-FILLED EYES ARE NOT FRIGHTENED
BY MY GRIEF...***

SOME ADMIT THAT THEY DON'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND IT.

***BUT NONE OF THEM CAN BE DISSUADED FROM THEIR BELIEF THAT GOD
IS WITH ME IN IT.***

THEY SAY HE HAS NEVER LEFT ME....

WOULD NOT..... IN FACT, HE IS IN THE ABYSS WITH ME, WAITING

AND HE WILL STAY WITH ME, AS LONG AS IT TAKES...

LOVE AND UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE SURROUND MY PIT....

THEY ARE REAL.....

THERE IS SOMETHING DEEPER THAN THE ABYSS...

"I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES"

HOPEFULLY, IT WILL NOT TAKE A TRAGEDY LIKE PAULA'S FOR US

TO EXPERIENCE OUR GOD'S FAITHFUL PRESENCE IN OUR LIFE.....

AND I KNOW THIS EXAMPLE OF PAULA D'ARCY'S LIFE COMES TO MIND

BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN VISITING A MEMBER OF THE UD STAFF AT MIAMI

VALLEY HOSPITAL WHO WAS THE DRIVER IN AN ACCIDENT IN WHICH HIS

GIRL FRIEND OF TWO YEARS WAS A PASSENGER AND WAS KILLED.....

AND THE DIFFICULTY OF FINDING SOME WORDS THAT WOULD EXPRESS

A REASSURING PRESENCE....FOR HIM

SUPPORT SOME FAITH AND HOPE IN HIS LIFE....

ONE THING YOU REALIZE IN A SITUATION LIKE THAT IS HOW IMPORTANT

FAMILY AND A SUPPORTIVE NETWORK OF FRIENDS IS FOR SOMEONE.....

IT'S LIKE ALL BRANCHES PULLING TOGETHER TO KEEP THIS ONE

BRANCH CLINGING TO THE VINE AND PREVENT IT FROM FALLING TO

THE WAYSIDE...

"I AM THE VINE. YOU ARE THE BRANCHES"

AS RICHARD ROHR SAYS, "YOU CANNOT NOT LIVE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD"....

AS CATHOLICS WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST, BODY AND BLOOD,

SOUL AND DIVINITY, IS REALLY PRESENT IN THIS EUCHARIST UNDER THE

APPEARANCES OF BREAD AND WINE.

***WE BELIEVE IT IS MORE THAN FELLOWSHIP THAT WE CELEBRATE
TOGETHER EVERY SUNDAY....***

IT IS MORE THAN COMMEMORATION AND REMEMBRANCE.

***WE PROFESS THAT WE RE-ENACT THE SAVING MYSTERY OF THE PASSION
AND DEATH OF JESUS AND THIS VERY MYSTERY BECOMES OUR FOOD.***

***WE HOLD THAT THE FULL REALITY OF JESUS CHRIST ENTERS OUR BODY
HE BECOMES PART OF US AND WE A PART OF HIM***

***"I AM THE VINE, YOU ARE THE BRANCHES. WHOEVER REMAINS IN ME
AND I IN HIM WILL BEAR MUCH FRUIT, BECAUSE WITH OUT ME YOU CAN
DO NOTHING"***