

## *Consoled by Jesus*

### *January 2021 Reflection*

In our groups this month, we had good and faith filled discussions.....about good days, and hard days ..... and riding the waves. The challenges and blessings of the holidays.... The challenges of isolation with the pandemic....the surprising moments of joy and blessing.

I appreciated very much everyone's sharing, we are all at different places in our journey, and yet, we are all at similar places. Trying to make sense of our new life.

I left the discussions feeling very much that God is with us all. Thank you.

Please find below the reflection for this month.

I only shared part of it at our morning group, and I think we ran out of time before I could share any of it at our evening group! I found it comforting, and I hope you do too.

God bless,

Kathy

*This reflection is taken from the book: Finding a Loving God in the Midst of Grief, Susan M. Erschen, pgs 122-125*

“What does it mean that Jesus is risen?” Pope Francis asked in his Easter message in 2013. “It means that the love of God can transform our lives and let those desert places in our hearts bloom. The love of God can do this!”

When we're grieving, we live in a desert place. We're thirsty. We're like the deer by the stream, spoken of in Psalm 42 and often depicted in cathedral windows and religious art:

As the deer longs for streams of water,

So my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, the living God. (Psalm 42:2-3)

The image is a promise that we will find the One for whom we thirst.

When we grieve, we thirst for the one who has died, even though we know we cannot have them back. Often, we don't know what we want instead. We may lock ourselves away, thinking nothing can satisfy us, but eventually thirst overwhelms us. We feel overcome with the need for light, beauty, food, activity, or someone to talk with us. In reality, what we really need is God. Because God is all of that. He is light. He is beauty. He is food for our soul. He is the activity in our hearts. He is someone to talk with. He is our true and only hope.

We thirst for beauty because it can heal. It can transform. It can lift our spirits. Flowers bring beauty to a funeral, but our grief is too raw then for us to appreciate them. Only weeks or months later do we find that we're ready for flowers, music, laughter, and sunrises to fill our lives and wash away our grief. We are ready for God to bring back the beauty.

Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and writer, knew grief. His mother died when he was only six. He missed her greatly. When his father remarried, Thomas went to live with his mother's family. Despite the grief of his early life, Merton later wrote, "There is nothing dead that cannot live again in the presence of His Spirit. No heart so dark, so hopeless, that it cannot be enlightened and brought back to itself."

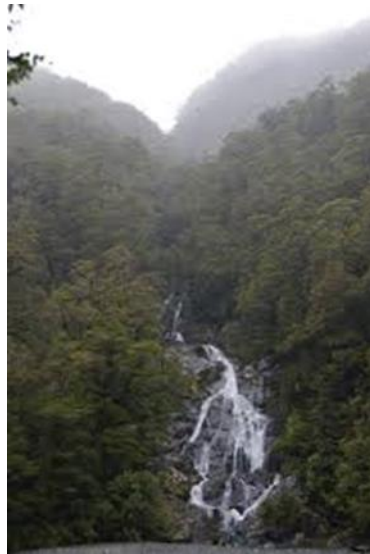
Merton was merely stating, in a different way, what God says to everyone:

See, I am doing something new!

Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

In the wilderness I make a way,

In the wasteland, rivers. (Isaiah 43:19)



Hope includes the feeling that Someone greater than we are is in control, the knowledge that everything will work out --- even if we don't know how. Hope gets us out of bed in the morning and inspires us to plant a garden, play the piano, or do other beautiful and healing things. To have hope is to have one of the three theological virtues. The seeds of these virtues – faith, hope, and charity – are planted in our hearts by God. He waters them by his grace. They grow strong in the light of his love.

The Church tells us, "Hope assures us that, with God's grace, we will see our way through what now seems such a daunting challenge. For believers, hope is not a matter of optimism, but a source for strength and action in demanding times. "

When we have hope, we surrender our pain and worries to God.

We believe his promise: “I know well the plans I have in mind for you....plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).



***Take good care!***

***Hope to “see” you at the February 11<sup>th</sup> 7pm presentation by Father Andrie (in person or livestreamed) and/or the small group zoom discussion the next day, Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at 10 am. Check the parish website for the links!***

***With you in spirit,***

***Kathy***