

Scripture Readings:

Psalm 46: 10-11

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Luke 22: 8, 14-15, 19-20

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ... And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying my blood, which is poured out for you."

Marcus invited me to write a devotional and I quickly responded "No" several times but it took me fervently praying all of Lent to Be Still and know God has ALWAYS been alongside me and in control from our birth many moons ago to today. Yes, *our* birth...I have been blessed with a twin sister. I am the second of four children and six weeks after we were born, my sister turned blue (a blue baby) and had hydrocephalus (water on the brain). She went into the hospital and had a shunt put in to drain the extra brain fluid and was treated with cobalt back in the day. She and Mom spent the first six months of our lives in the hospital. My great aunt from Alabama moved in to help my dad with my older brother and me. My sister is classified as special needs by Social Security but she exudes God's unconditional love every minute of every day even when she is not feeling well.

To Be Still is to know God is our source of strength in the midst of our struggles. My sister displays grace, compassion, and unconditional love to everyone. She is the one person I drop everything for especially when she calls; I answer it because she turns off her cell phone to "save" the battery. I saw her for thirty minutes outside with a plastic screen while our family read *The Cajun Night Before Christmas*. There wasn't a dry eye – a whole year of not seeing her sweet smile or hear her sweet and infectious laugh in person has about killed me.

This past year with the Covid-19 pandemic has been hard on us all. My sister has suffered many TIAs (miniature strokes) and is now in a wheelchair, she had her childhood shunt replaced and now has adult-onset cerebral palsy all before the pandemic. She has taught me from our birth what unconditional love is. She taught me to put others' needs before her own; it comes naturally to her and through her example, I have attempted to emulate her and this gift of grace she displays. I struggle with God's commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself." Because I love my neighbor more than myself by allowing God's love, light, and grace to extend to others. I'm not Polly Anna; I am a sinner but I try every day to do God's will for me.

I am a “cradle Catholic” born and raised in New Orleans where Catholic churches adorn every couple of blocks and where the sacraments started with Baptism, 1st Reconciliation, 1st Communion, Confirmation, Marriage, Anointing of the Sick (pre-surgery for me). I was the only child in our family who did not attend a parochial school but I did attend CCD classes every Sunday morning. I learned how my faith is steeped in sacraments which have formed my faith. My faith is not a supplement for my life but the foundation of my life. I wake every morning in prayer asking God to show me His will for me and praying for those on my prayer list. I end the day in prayer hoping I listened and fulfilled His will.

Over the past year, we have not returned to Mass due to not feeling comfortable in a large congregation size but have found God’s love right here at LTUMC. I have met so many of you with open arms and hearts; YOU have filled a void and for that, I am humbled and grateful. I have missed the Eucharist and Reconciliation and Marcus has been a patient listener for me and how much these sacraments mean. Reconciliation allows me to be humble through confessing my sins and having them absolved. The Eucharist is the most impactful sacrament for me. With the Eucharist, we are called together in communion to love one another and leave church with a focus on doing God’s will for us during the next week only to bring our 3 Ts (time, talent & treasures) to the altar the following week. The Eucharist sustains me spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically.

Today is Holy Thursday – Maundy Thursday. This is the marking of the last day of Lent and the start of the Triduum, the three holy days: Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Resurrection Sunday. Maundy Thursday is where Jesus celebrates the start of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Jesus announced the events later including his betrayal, the denial of Peter, his arrest, crucifixion, and his resurrection. This is a powerful day filled with communion, instruction of humility, and selfless acts Jesus performed for all of us.

Prayer: Dear heavenly and gracious Father, thank you for blessing me with my twin sister who demonstrates unconditional love through putting others before her own needs. Thank you for sending Jesus to die for our sins and the sacrificial gift of the Most Holy Eucharist. Help me to Be Still, rest in your patient love and may I do your will and not my will. In your name, I pray. Amen.

~ Submitted by Saunders Grommesh for the Thirty-eighth Reading of Lent.