Fifth Week of Lent: Meditation & Reflection

During Lent, we have an opportunity to *live our dash* through a process of examining our lives for a little spring cleaning and spiritual practice. Today's poem is *The Day Between*. It reminds us that life continually offers us lessons, if our minds are open to recognize, accept, and learn from them.

Live Your Dash
The Day Between
by Linda Ellis

Yesterday will never reoccur;
tomorrow cannot be foreseen.
The only thing that matters
is the day found in between.

The past and the future
fill too much of what is me
with memories and emotions
of what has passed…or what might be.

Anticipation and regret
seem to gnaw at my soul
until I'm wrapped in a cocoon of days
that I cannot control.

Though one is gone forever;
its seconds slowly ticked away,
and I was never promised
a day after today.

The present is a perfect blend
of what I've done and where I've been.
I have never been this old before,
nor will I be this young again.

Today, I made a solemn vow
only to myself
to place yesterday's regrets and woes
high upon a shelf . . .

Week Five: *Take Up Your Cross*

Jesus told them, "You're all going to feel that your world is falling apart and that it's my fault. There's a Scripture that says, I will strike the shepherd; The sheep will go helter-skelter. "But after I am raised up, I will go ahead of you, leading the way to Galilee." Peter blurted out, "Even if everyone else is ashamed of you when things fall to pieces, I won't be." Jesus said, "Don't be so sure. Today, this very night in fact, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." He blustered in protest, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you." All the others said the same thing.

While all this was going on, Peter was down in the courtyard. One of the Chief Priest's servant girls came in and, seeing Peter warming himself there, looked hard at him and said, "You were with the Nazarene, Jesus." He denied it: "I don't know what you're talking about." He went out on the porch. A rooster crowed. The girl spotted him and began telling the people standing around, "He's one of them." He denied it again. After a little while, the bystanders brought it up again. "You've got to be one of them. You've got 'Galilean' written all over you." Now Peter got really nervous and swore, "I never laid eyes on this man you're talking about." Just then the rooster crowed a second time. Peter remembered how Jesus had said, "Before a rooster crows twice, you'll deny me three times." He collapsed in tears. -Mark 14:27-31, 66-72

Peter declared that even if it meant death, he would go with Jesus; and yet, only a short while later, he denied he ever knew him. We make bold resolutions and promises to change our lives, but often slip back into our old ways without even realizing it. What does it take for us to change our lives? What do we need to put to death in our lives that holds us back? How do we take up the cross and follow Jesus?

Practice: Draw a shape of a cross in your journal. This week, when you notice something holding you back … fear, disillusionment, hopelessness, despair, envy … add it to your cross. Know that Jesus knows the pain you feel, the places of despair and suffering. Know that Jesus knows it all, and still, loves you deeply. As you pray this week, remember God's great love through Jesus. Remember Jesus' love for all, including his love for Peter, who just couldn't follow through, and even Judas, who betrayed him. Still, Jesus loved him, and welcomed him to the table, and Jesus' love can transform and change us. Jesus never gives up hope in us.

Week Five: *Take Up Your Cross*

Outreach Activity

Select one or all of the following activities and discover how they help you *Live YOUR Dash* by considering how to *Take Up Your Cross* and follow Jesus.

Activity 1

Making Amends

We all have times in our lives where we have denied things just as Peter has and come to regret it later. This week reflect on those things in prayer. Are there people that you have wronged or denied in your life and you feel sorry about it? If so make an effort to reach out to them. Establish contact, do something nice for them, apologize if necessary. Tell them how you feel.

Activity 2

Accepting Yourself

One of the biggest things about life is that there are things that we as individuals need to work on and address. What is an area in your life that you are struggling with? What is something that maybe you have been putting off, a part of yourself you just ignore or something that you are not as comfortable with as you would like to be? Do something for yourself this week that addresses this. It could be taking a moment to write about something that is bothering you, reaching out to someone to get some help or doing something that you have been procrastinating about. Reflect, what is something that you wish you had more time to do? Remember that tomorrow is not promised so make the effort today.

Activity 3

God Loving … YOU!

How can you show God's love to yourself, even when you are uncertain if you deserve this love? How can you embrace unconditional love? Think of one of your favorite hobbies or some activities that always gives you such joy or encourage you to think well of yourself. If you can, even though you are disappointed by your response to a situation or problem, choose to do something positive for yourself. Maybe you can visit with your favorite friend, take a walk along the river, invite a friend to dinner at your favorite restaurant or to your favorite coffee shop, etc. Try to be actively engaged or plan to be with others who you know will respond to you with love and positivity. And after you have treated yourself to this special time, pause and imagine just how much more God loves you just because you are who you are.