



Jan-April 2022



In Between

April 13, 2022

Rachel Yates

Some of you who work closely with me know that my father is dying. He has had a good life, but at 92 years, his body is tired. After a recent, difficult stay in the hospital, he was released home and into hospice. I went with my husband, my daughter, and her family to visit him in Boise this past week.

It was a very good visit. My dad was clear-headed, understood what was happening, and engaged us in ordinary conversation and storytelling. He finished his and my mom's taxes. One warm day, he hosed off the patio and did some weed-whacking. Another day, he gave me grief for bringing in the empty garbage can because he'd planned that would be his special project for the day. He listened to his 3-year-old great-grandson chatter and watched his 1-year-old great-granddaughter careen around the living room. It was a good week.

Now he has stopped eating and spends his days in bed. His body is ready for death, even if his spirit perhaps is not. He is in between.

Having returned to Milwaukee, I wait each morning for the news of his passing -- not wishing for it necessarily but expecting it. I, too, am in between.

I know that I am not alone. Many of you have shared news of the recent loss of a family member. Our grief is both individual and corporate in the body of Christ.

Holy Week has been especially tender. As we reach this mid-point -- this in-between place -- we can still remember the enthusiasm of Palm Sunday and Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Those were the good days, when death seemed far off. Conversations were upbeat, and projects continued.

Now, mid-week we are faced with the reality of death. Like the disciples, we have heard the words that death is imminent, but it's hard to fully grasp the report. We'd prefer to jump to Easter, bypassing Good Friday altogether. Can't we just skip the anguish, woundedness, dehydration, and labored breathing? Let's set aside the waiting for death and go find the empty tomb.

We can't. We are instead relegated to the time in between what was glorious and promising in the fullness of life and the end of life as we understand it. This time, too, is holy. We examine the frailty and transience of our lives. We acknowledge our complicity in the pain of others. We grieve, and we feel flat. Laughter catches us by surprise, as if it's not appropriate right now. And, we continue to wait for death because it must come.

May your in-between time this week be rich and holy.