

All Saints B/Nov. 7, 2021

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

On July 7 of this year, my Aunt Danielle died. Just over 3 months later on Oct. 20, my Aunt Theresa died. On Wednesday of this past week, we had the rosary for my Aunt Theresa.

When my cousin Rachelle came in the door of the mortuary, you could tell she was really upset. My Aunt Danielle was her mother and I knew it must have been really hard for her to come in to the funeral home. Trust me, a lot of people refuse to go, and she had a good reason to want to skip this one.

When she came into where my aunt was, she said, "I'm not going to cry. I'm not going to cry," as she looked up and dabbed her eyes and did all she could to not cry.

Do you ever do that? Do you ever do all you can to keep yourself from crying in public?

There is something really wrong with our society, because we have poop pooped crying in public. Even in a sad movie we don't want anyone to see us cry. "I'm not crying, you're crying."

What is up with that?

It's an illness I think, this having to be strong and not letting others see our cracks. It's really a problem, because there is nothing as healing as crying in community. Even Jesus did it.

Jesus cried with Mary and Martha at the loss of their brother Lazarus, even though he knew Lazarus would be resurrected, even ahead of schedule.

And so even though we know our loved ones will be resurrected and we will all be reunited, together again. That God will swallow up death forever and every tear will be wiped away from our faces. It's still ok to grieve loss here and now. It's okay to cry in public and to allow others to cry with us.

I don't know if this is true or not, but I think crying is contagious and that it is contagious because it is meant for healing – our healing as a community.

I am a sympathetic crier. How about you?

It's kind of like yawning. When I see someone yawn, or even mention it, I yawn. When I see someone crying, I cry with them, and it's actually a really great thing to do – to cry with others. It's how we support one another and let others know they are not alone.

Things are not perfect right now. We are waiting on the Lord. We are in those in between times of already and not yet. We know God's promises, but they have yet to be entirely fulfilled, and so we cry and that's totally ok – it's more than ok – it's something we need to do.

We cry in our grief. We cry for our losses and we cry for the injustices in the world.

We cry. It's a gift. It is a form of wordless prayer. When we can't form the words, our body will pray for us as the Spirit intercedes.

It has been scientifically proven that when we cry stress hormones are removed from our body, and after we cry the endocrine system releases endorphins that make us feel better. So actually, we should really let those tears out every time they come upon us.

Better out than in I always say. And in Jesus' day, people actually collected tears in little jars. They were a sign of respect for those who had died.

This tradition came back again in the 19th Century with bottles that had special stoppers in them that allowed the tears to evaporate. When the bottle was empty, the mourning period was done.

Today tear bottles are also used to collect tears of joy.

Isn't it interesting that we cry both in grief and joy? It seems as if death and resurrection are directly tied to our tear ducts. The baptismal waters flow through our eyes.

And when we gather around this table for Holy Communion, we get a foretaste of the great feast that is to come, when our tears of grief will be replaced with tears of joy.

When we have communion, we communion with God and all of our loved ones from all times and places. We communion with those who have died, those that are living in different places, and those who haven't even been born yet.

At this place, we live in the promise, God's promise of eternal life, and so today, on this All Saints Day, we have put our names and the names of our loved ones both living and dead on our new banner that Cathy helped us out with.

Right now all of those people are with us spiritual. One day we will all be together physically as well. That is a beautiful thing. And sometimes beautiful things make us cry as well.

Tears are like little splashes of the baptismal waters flowing through us out into the world, and they are meant for our healing and for the healing of the world.

In baptism, we are all made saints as we are washed in the tears of death and resurrection – grief and joy – not only for ourselves, but for the well-being of others.

Today we remember that we are saints in baptism, made one in Christ, forgiven and set free, promised eternal life in God.

And being saints, already living in God's promises, we take our tears out into the world to bring healing. Tears of grief mixed with tears of joy – death and resurrection.

Crying in public is a testimony to the pain of this world. Tears are also how we proclaim hope in the midst of tragedy.

Tears empower the Holy Spirit to make change through us where we can do something here and now, and tears also cry out to God for help in those places where we are powerless.

Mary and Martha wept, but they couldn't bring their brother back to life. Jesus wept and Lazarus was resurrected.

The Serenity Prayer is very wise in this respect: God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

Serenity being the peace of knowing that God will take care of those things of which we are powerless, and courage being the Holy Spirit active in us.

There are things that are beyond our control. That's the truth. The only things we can control are our own actions. Crying is one of those things we need not control.

When we cry, it is for healing. So, never hold back those tears. It's more painful to hold them in than to let them go freely anyway.

In baptismal waters, we are called to flow with the tears. So, unbind yourself from thinking that tears showing our weakness is a bad thing. It's not.

Remember what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9 – The Lord said to him “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

So, let your tears flow. There is no shame in it, and of all the places that you are totally safe to cry in, it is the church.

Jesus wept, and so do we. Thanks be to God. Amen.