

Wow, isn't that beautiful? Wow, that really touched my heart. Thank you so much Merrick, and thank you to each one of you for braving the great flood of February, 2024 to be here with me for the last night of the parish mission. And hello everybody that's on the live stream. I don't know what way the camera's pointing, but you are welcome to be here. This is my favorite night on the parish mission. It's the night on the Eucharist, and I have been working on this talk for four or five years actually. And so you're going to hear it in a different way. I heard through Merrick's song tonight, which really settled my heart, some themes that I had not thought about before through the gift of your music. So thank you Merrick, and thank you to the staff for making me feel welcome and taking me out to El Cholo for dinner tonight.

And I had something called flan, which I've never had before and it was wonderful. So everybody has just been incredible. Thank you for taking this time. It's for making this space for the Lord of life to come and visit with us tonight. I wanted to share with you, I had a few slides, but they're just my own slides, but I want the rain to cease. And I was praying about that for you today, how weather can be such a factor. And I love the rain because it reminds me of home. But this prayer came to me today as I was thinking and praying. Come us, oh Lord, as you still the storm, still us, oh Lord, and keep us from harm. Let all tumult within us cease and fold us Lord in your peace. So that is my prayer for you tonight, that you would allow the Lord to come alongside you and to give you exactly what you need.

There was a gentleman last night, you might have remembered, and he said to me, I dunno if he's here tonight, and he changed seats, but he said to me that he was praying last night that he felt nothing. Do you remember that If you were here? And I had said to him, because he was praying, because he was very angry about something. And I said to him, when you were praying with me, you didn't hear the voice of the Lord, right? And he said, no, I heard nothing. And I said, but did you hear anger? And he said, no. I said, were you feeling angry? And he said, no. So I said, for that three minutes, the Lord of the harvest sent into your heart a spirit of peace. And although you did not hear his voice, you heard a spirit of peace. And for the first time in many years, you felt no anger. I would say you heard God's voice tonight. So what I want to encourage you tonight in this talk around the Eucharist is to listen for the ways that God is coming to you tonight to speak a word into your heart. Someone said to me, you said, God speaks, but I don't know how that feels. And someone last night had a vision, said you were talking about golden light last night, but I didn't see golden at all. I saw silver and gossamer and blue.

So I said to me afterwards, what did that mean? I said, it wasn't given to me, it was given to her. God is going to speak. And even in his silence, he speaks volumes. So let's talk about the Eucharist, which is like I said, every time we receive the Eucharist, we're like tabernacles with its feet. We're like tabernacles with legs. And we go out into the world strolling around bringing the presence of Jesus to people. So our theme has been healing, openness, prayer in you. Chris, don't worry about what's on the screen right now. This is more to keep myself on track. Last night too, we talked about the woman at the well coming for living water. Now the first time we hear of the phrase living water, it's not at that story with the Samaritan woman, it's actually in Jeremiah. And people have committed two wrongs for the Lord. The first one is that they have forgotten him or forsaken him. And the second one is that we have dug our own cisterns that have become broken and cannot hold water.

We have forgotten God in a lot of different ways. And maybe it's not you or I, although sometimes we get up and we go about our day or we come to mass on Sunday and then we remember why we're blessed. And the second way is the forgotten cisterns image is an interesting one. So in the Middle East, the people dug cisterns as reservoirs of water. Water is so important in California too. It's so precious as a resource. Now can you imagine if the reservoir was cracked, it would start to leak. And why did they say that in Jeremiah? It was because the Israelites had taken on false gods and their hearts were like broken cisterns that had cracked open and they could not hold the goodness of the Lord because they had made idols. Now, we make a lot of idols today in our political life, idols of money, of entertainment professionals or sports heroes. And I know that in Green Bay because when there's a Packer game on, everything grinds to a halt, right? Although Aaron Rogers was a Californian is what I understand. But we make idols that comfort us.

We have our routines and our way of being in the world that make us feel good about who we are and what we're doing. So tonight, the Lord wants to break those idols. He wants to heal us. He wants to use mortar, the mortar of grace to knit us back to wholeness so that we can hold water that we can give to other people who are thirsty. Now, thirst is one of Pope Francis's great themes. Actually. This is what he says about our parishes. Our parishes should be a sanctuary of sanctuaries. Our parishes should be a sanctuary of sanctuaries, a holy of holies where thirsty people come to drink. Now, on the first night of our mission, we talked about hunger and what we were hungry for. And last night we talked about thirst. And in the body and the blood, when we received the bread and the wine, our hunger and our thirst are completely quenched and we are full.

So let's talk about this. Oh, going the other way, Julianne, this image of Jesus, this comes back to us, the Song of the Hungry people. And so as we enter into this part of the night, I want us to acknowledge that sistern in our life, that place in our heart that cracked open, maybe it was a bad relationship that bled us dry and our sistern of our heart cracked open. Or maybe it was because we put our trust in someone who hurt us or used us in a way that was not good for us. So I'll sing this part for you. And then Mary's going to invite you to sing with us. Though the world may he tell us to look at ourselves, we reach out to another where suffering dwells as our hands become Christ's hands, we are healed by the grace of the power and the spirit that is here in this place. Check now my legs

On

Ourselves.

Christ

The Spirit.

You cannot heal yourself by wounding. Another Saint Ambrose said that healed people heal others and broken people break others. It is only love that transforms and it is in the Eucharist that we find the greatest gift. Can I thank you all for coming again, especially those that have come in in the last couple of moments. Thank you that you braved the rain to be here with me. So we start at a cradle, we go back to the start, which is a cold place song that I absolutely love the scientist. Let's go back to the start. I realize singing this church is ridiculous. We have the most amazing musicians ever. But I think in songs sometimes, and I think in stories, and sometimes when I'm walking down the street and I'm thinking of stories, songs come to me at the same time. Do you remember when you found out you were expecting a baby?

One of the first purchases that you made was to purchase a crib, a cradle and cribs sometimes are passed along if they're not issues with safety and all of that. And babies getting their heads stuck in bars led all the bad. We shouldn't talk about that, right? But if we are looking at cribs, one of the first purchases that we make is the cradle. It's the cradle of life. And some of you remember that or maybe even had a cradle that was passed on or made. Cradles are special. And every year when we come to Christmas, we celebrate the incarnation, which is God made flesh. And we look at the image of a cradle. God's love is bigger than any hurt. And I've said that for the last few nights. But he can cradle us. He can cradle our broken sister and put it whole.

I remember coming home, my husband had like a thousand pieces for the crib that we were going to set up, and I was very excited about this crib. I had the Cadillac of cribs for this child. I knew that was all the things that they tell you you need a crib. And yet Christ was born in the raw poverty of a stable, we call it a crib, but it's not a crib. It was a feed trough for the animals. He was born in a feed trough. They should tell us something about how he wants to come to us. He wants to come and feed us.

He wants to come to each one of us and give us the food that only he knows we need. So when you receive the Eucharist, yes, technically no. Actually you're receiving the body of blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. We know that. But technically or actually you are receiving the exact food that you need. And I'm going to tell you a story for nursing moms. Is that what you remind me about that when you nurse

your child, this is a little odd if it's making the gentle folk a little bit queasy right now. But guys, you're with it here. Keep going. Right? When you are feeding your child milk your own milk, the milk changes depending on what the child needs.

So when your child is sick, actually the milk changes and it is infused with more antibodies because your body knows what your child needs. Even if you are not conscious of that, that is a medical fact. So the colostrum volume changes actually verified this with some scientists and a friend of mine who's a pediatrician, and if you're a nursing mom, and if you've ever looked at it, you know it changes. And as a child gets older, the fat content changes. They don't need that fat anymore, they need something else. The Eucharist comes in the form everybody can recognize, but the way it comes to you is given in the exact DNA that your body, that your spirit, that your soul needs. And we don't talk about this, it's very profound. Okay? Oh, going the wrong way, Julianne. It's been said a few times. So when we talk about giving, give us this day our daily bread.

The first place we learned about bread is the feed trough at Bethlehem. And I told you this story last night of baking bread with my son. Is there anyone here who's new here tonight who didn't come the last two nights? Yeah, don't be afraid. I see you like sheepishly raising your hooray. You came, you did your homework. I remember you from mass and Sunday, you had the heart sweater, you brought the man. Thank you. Wonderful. Well thank you all for coming tonight, our new folk. I shared this story last night. I was thinking of all the ways that Jesus could have come to be with us. He came to us and bred, which is universal to all cultures. But why not something a bit more jazzy? Give us this day, like I said, our daily chocolate or wine or whatever. No bread. Bread is the way he makes food.

Come to us. And as I was baking bread one year during Lent, because I was really, really praying about this, I studied under some great theologians, some of the best theologians in the world and they never gave me a good explanation for why Jesus came his bread. They would make all kinds of references to things, but it was until my son's hands were placed over mine and we started baking bread together that I learned that the rhythm of bread was the rhythm of Jesus' life in the Paschal mystery, his life, death and resurrection. On Good Friday, he comes to us and he's stripped bear down to the essential parts of what makes us human beings. His name is taken from him, his identity is taken from him. It is mocked and violently knit by the weight of the world's sin. On good Friday when you bake bread, you gather the ingredients which are primitive and raw together and you start to shape them.

And I said, I bake bread on days when I'm mad because needing bread is tough. I have tennis at the moment, so it's been hard. And I make bread two or three times a week. I make soda bread, which is what I grew up with. Ireland. You probably ate a lot of that grown up. But then I also make yeast bread. I haven't evolved to be a higher beam making sourdough, which is everywhere right now, but I make yeasted breads and I give them away. And that process of kneading is tough and it works out my frustrations and it reminds me bread isn't bread unless it is shaped and kn and molded. And Jesus did that on the cross. He took on all of that. And then after you have the bread together and you've really knitted, then something special happens. A lot of people think you just take the bread and you put it into the oven, but you don't.

You need to let the bread rest because bread that doesn't rest and will not rise on Easter Sunday. You just got it. I saw your bing and neither do we. Jesus's Paschal mystery, the Triduum, the Holy Day's model bread, his crucifixion, the resting in the quiet of the tomb, and then his rising to new life because he rested in the silence. The Eucharist teaches us a pattern. Life can be tough, it can be violent and cruel, but in order to face it and rise to be joyful, we need to rest. And not just wellness rest, I do love to go to a least bag a once in a while as a little treat for myself. Fun fact, my husband gave me a gift certificate to get a massage like three years ago and I went finally last month. It took that long, right? And I felt great after, but I'm talking about rest that only comes from the Lord, not just rest, but renewal to try again, to love again, to enter in.

So it is a wonder to me that the first place that Jesus arrives his throne in fact is a feed trough in a place called Bethlehem. And the word Bethlehem means house of bread, house of bread. His whole life is pointing us to the Eucharist. And it is also an unusual thing that St. Luke uses the phrase that you find in the upper room, the same word for in he uses in the upper room. It's the same word for the Lord. It's the bread, the rest that comes from being risen into new life. Jesus's upper room was the last place that the disciples heard his earthly voice before he ascended and went to be with his father and came back and appeared in the upper room when they were afraid. So he appears as bred to them reminding them of his birth in Bethlehem, the house of bread. Is this not amazing?

So the tomb, the quiet rest. And then this is my favorite image of Jesus, the resurrection. It's Rembrandt's image of the resurrection, which is just fire. I don't know about you, but when you see images of Jesus coming, some of my favorite images look like this. But there's also one image that I love of him when Jesus comes, it's from Mario Manti. It's called The Five Wounds, the man of Christ. He comes and his wounds are still visible. So Jesus came in his glory and did not take away the marks of his suffering or his trauma, which teaches us something that we as a church need to be a place where we can bring our wounds to the table and not have them hidden.

Hope you can bring some of your wounds to the table tonight, Bethlehem. So in World War ii, children in London were repatriated because of the war. My grandmother was a parachute packer during the war. She married my grandfather. He was an RAF pilot for the British Royal Air Force. He flew many missions over Germany. He was heavily decorated. He was a rear machine gunner at the age of 18. He signed up because his father was mustard gassed in World War I and suffered terribly with his health. And he used to sit at the back of a Lancaster Bomber as a rear machine gunner and he had no hair on his arms because the kickback from the machine gun had singed and burned all the hair on his arms. He was quite a character. He used to receive an invitation to the queen's garden party every year, which went down like a leg balloon in Ireland.

My dad is a little British man who married a little Irish woman, so he was an incredible man. But he remembers these stories and this story stuck with me and I verified it and it's true. He met my grandmother Eve. She was a parachute packer. She used to pack the parachutes during the war. She was in the waf, the Women's Air Force. And when they married, she wore her wedding dress was parachute silk. And she remembers children being sent away from London because of the bombings out into the countryside. And she remembers stories of those children who were sent away from their families who were refugees in other people's homes or in barns. And they were terrified because they had endured some of the night skies and London. And even if they were fed and even if they knew that they weren't going to be bombed in the country, they could not fall asleep. The children developed terrible insomnia.

And so the women came together to talk about this. How could they get the children to fall asleep and stay asleep during the night? They were no longer worried about their homes being bombed. They were no longer worrying about having bread and food the next day. They needed to give them hope. And you know what they put them in bed with was a piece of bread. They would send the little children from London to bed holding a piece of bread so that they knew when they woke up in the morning they were going to be okay. They had hope because they held bread in their hands.

Every time we come to mass, we have the opportunity to hold bread in our hands and not just hold it, but to take it within us. Our hearts are hungry for hope and for a new day. And bread is given to us to show us the way. That's incredible. What a gift. So bread also involves death because there is no bread without wheat and there is no wheat without a seed. And I have these, I used to have these romantic notions of like Jesus would say he'd go out on a boat and I'm picturing a catamaran.

You just have these images. The blessed mother is going on a donkey to register. Can you imagine what that felt like? Ladies, eight and a half months pregnant with no restrooms on, can you think about this? But I went to a friend of mine who's a farmer, his name is Maddie. I talk about him a lot. He also has sheep and he plants wheat plants spring and he plants winter wheat. And I said to Maddie, tell me about

the process of planting. Now he doesn't have one of these big automatic automated farms. He still does things by hand, but he does have a tractor and a planter. So the seeds go into the ground. He walked me through the whole process. I had this romantic notion of, remember we talked about planting the last two nights that the seeds, you just drop it into the ground and it just emerges magnificent, just like the daffodils right now. But you know what happens to the seed of wheat when it's pushed into the dark of the earth? It germinates in the winter and in the dark and the seed actually comes under stress and pressure and literally splits open wheat seeds split completely apart. So new life can come.

Jesus is that seed of wheat split open on the cross so that we could have new life. And every time I think of this song, which Merrick, I have never heard that rendition of unless the grain of wheat, I'm going to sing the way I learned. But then you are going to teach us this new way to sing this song. It's from John 1224. This is what John says to us. I tell you that unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. We are those seeds of hope. We are an embodiment of the bread of life sent out to the world. Unless a grain of wheat shall fall upon the ground and die, it remains but a single grain with no life. We ready

To follow along with Julianne's version. It's number 5 0 4 shall fall if we then we shall live if we remains with no.

And I have told we have halftime at the moment and we have a word from our sponsor. Thank you intermission.

This is your sponsor.

I just want to, I won't get another chance to tell you how grateful I am to this great woman. Julianne stands for coming and spending time with us. It's amazing to see her spirit and her vitality in her life. It's a huge gift to whoever she meets and she's shared that with us over these last three days. So I want us as we lead tonight, we're not leaving yet. We have another full next section. But as really tonight just to thank her for the incredible gift and blessing that she's given to us. It's changing the face of St. Monica and will be, if you're ever grateful for that. Julianne, I'm known in my heart that we need more women speaking and sharing their life and their testimony. And you are living proof of that. And I especially want to thank you for your kindness and your incredible generosity to us.

Monica's, you've made us feel so good and I just believe very much in you and I'm very grateful to you. I'd like to make sure that we do our best to honor her. So we will give her a gift as she leaves. And if you can help me with that, that would be a wonderful thing. So we're going to have a little collection for this great work that Julianne is doing and we want to make sure that you have that opportunity to thank her by way of your support. Our brothers and sisters on livestream. I hope that you will also consider using that Bing that we talked so much about over those last years during Covid or Esti. Monica do not slash give and make a donation to support the great ministry of Julianne. She works hard and she's traveling and making a big difference in this world. And we want to support you, Julianne, any way we can because you are a great gift to our church and to this world. So my brothers and sisters, I want to thank you for your great spirit by coming over these last three nights that has been just incredible. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Peace. I My peace. I peace the

Thank you Mary. Thank you everybody. Power two, thank you for your generosity and your support and thank you Monsignor and the staff at Parish. I love this place. I really do. It is a special place. I know I've told you that, but the spirit that's here is just so joyful and welcoming and I feel blessed to have seen something really remarkable. So thank you. Continuing on with our Eucharist, I want to talk with you about falling apart. And I know we have talked a little bit about this, but I was watching a chicken one day. This is Wisconsin. There are farm animals, but I take my kids to this little petting zoo and there's little chicks and they're pecking in to get out of the egg. And what I realized is it took them forever and they have a little egg beak and it falls off and the little chick is bloody.



And then it's all like pathetic looking. It's all wet and slimy and it can hardly stand because it took all this energy to break out. And I thought the egg didn't just fall apart so that the chicken could emerge majestic, all fluffed up like the Easter chicken, we think it is, but it's a pathetic little slimy thing and it's lying there. And so my kids are, I'm looking at this through the eyes of my children. They're so disappointed because we've been watching this chick for days at this petting. There's one very close to us where you can go and come and see this little, and then I realized the egg didn't fall apart for the chick to emerge, it literally had to break open. It had to break open. I think there's times in our lives we think we're falling apart or our church is falling apart or look around at the world.

Our world is falling apart. But really if we reframe it, what I think God is doing to us, just like he did the chicken, is he's breaking us open. He's breaking us open so that something new can emerge. And nowhere do you see that. Then in Eucharist, this is a Salvador dolly image of Jesus on the cross. And I love it because it reveals that. You can see the sinew along his shoulder and his spine. He's literally broken open for us. I actually wanted to call my book Braving the Thin Places, breaking Open. But my publisher was like, that is way too scary for people. And it's because breaking open is so profoundly painful and personal, but God meets us in the breaking open. And here's what I want to say. Some of you have gone through unspeakably hard things, difficult loss and sadness and pain and tragedy, and God loves you in the midst of all of that.

And in being broken open, you are more beautiful and lovely because of that, not less, not less beautiful and stronger and resilient even if you don't see it or know it and you feel like you've completely fallen apart. The Eucharist teaches us that being broken open is the best gift that we can give each other in our suffering and our joy because what's been put back together is even more beautiful. When you come to mass here, you'll hear Father say the words, this is my body blessed and broken for you. He blesses the bread and then he breaks it open. He doesn't have the Eucharist fall open magically for you. He literally has to tear it apart for you, for us, for each one of us, this is my body blessed for you. This is my body broken for you. So I want to tell you this story of what it meant for me to be broken open.

So this is my family. This is right after this experience. So they're a little bit younger At the time, a couple of years ago I was walking on the beach and I like to pick up seed glass. And as I was bending down, I felt a lump, I felt a lump. Something in my body moved and not the lumps that magically appear after the age of 40 when your whole body just seems to rearrange itself. Young people are looking and going, what does she trust me? But I felt something there and I said nothing because I thought to myself, is this what I'm feeling? And you're slightly terrified, but you're having this own dialogue now lumps in my family aren't great things to have. My aunt died at 50 from lumps. My mother was 52 when she passed away. 54, pardon me when she passed away.

Yeah. My dear friend Brian, he passed away at 39 from cancer, and my assistant who worked with me at the diocesan offices was 33 when she passed from cancer. So all of that was going through my mind and my heart when I found my lump. And I went home and I said nothing because I thought, oh, it's just probably something and just ignore it. We like to do that. We just kind of out of sight out of mind. But then I felt it again. I was just under here and I woke up one morning, my husband said to me, you're not yourself these days. What's going, when are you going to tell me? I said, I found the lump. And he said, where? And I told him, I said, can you feel it? And he could feel it. And that was relief to me that someone could feel that I hadn't imagined this. And I went to my doctor and she said, I feel it too. And we have to get this checked out. The problem is Julianne, because of your family history, I need to get a very specific specialist to have a look at this lump and she's not available for a couple of weeks. Boy is that talking.

And so during that time I was like, I know you got this. God, why is this happening to me? I know he got this God. Oh, right. It was like this swing of going from one thing to the other and I felt like I was totally falling apart. And then one night I went up to my son's room, Sean, Patrick, the little one here with this little yes. And I went to put him in bed and it was about 10 to eight and we prayed and we'd read the story together and I was just, okay, now goodnight. Love you. And you're just starting to tiptoe out of the room

because those few minutes are the difference between you getting a little bit of a night to yourself or the swing of he's going to be up all night. And he goes, mom. And in that moment, any wild number of things can happen.

He's thirsty. He needs to use the bathroom, he needs to go downstairs. Where's this stuffed animal? How tall is Jesus? All the little questions that they have in their heart just come humbling out in those few minutes. And I rolled my eyes, but I thought I need to take the time. And I went in and I said, you okay Sean? What's going on? He said, I have a question. I said, yeah. He said, sit here, you patted the bed. And I sat down, are you okay? Are you okay, mama? Just like that. Very sweet. I felt my eyes filling up with tears. I said, mommy's just had a few difficult days.

And I said, I'm going to be good. We're going to be good, Sean, we're good. And I'm thinking to myself, liar, liar her pants on fire. But I started to leave and he goes, that wasn't the question. So I came back, sat down, and then I'm going to put down my tricker here for a moment. And I said, what do you want to ask mom? And he said, is it true mom? And he was very strong on this. Is it true mom? Just like that. I said, what is true? He said, what the father says at mass you went like this. If you eat this bread, you will live forever. Is that true mom?

And here was my child holding eternal life up to me and asking me if I believed. And I said, it's true. I held his little face, gave him little kisses. I said, it is true. We will live for him with him forever. And I walked down that stairs in tears, but knowing it was going to be okay. And then usually when I tell the story, I move on. And then people are like, what happened to the lumps? I went to a specialist and when my mother passed away, we threw dragonflies in as she was being lowered into the ground. And because my mother thought throwing dirt in is very tough for a child to throw in some dirt into a coffin. So she had us throw little dragonflies in for the grandchildren. And I went into the consultant's office and there was a massive dragonfly print behind and I knew I was going to be okay and I had to go for monitoring and all sorts of things, but the lumps were just having a little party in there and they were okay and they were benign and all was well. That was one of the most powerful moments in my life where it forced me to think about when I step up to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, what am I saying?

What am I revealing to him? And he's revealing to me because remember when Father holds up the Eucharist to you and you are looking at Jesus, Jesus is also looking at you. He sees you. And what does he see? Tired, wonderful or energetic, lovely people. He sees you in the Eucharist. It is a window into God's soul and his love for you. It is remarkable. I gave this prayer last night when you feel like you're falling apart and you're just being broken, open into this. These are the words. I can't, can't forgive. I can't get past this. I can't, but you can. Jesus, show me the way. Jesus show me the way. This is one of my favorite Irish expressions. Blessed are the broken for they let in the light. Blessed are actually in Ireland. It's blessed are the cracked. Blessed are the cracked for they led in the light. And when we bring our brokenness to God, something beautiful happens. And there's a gentleman here, when I shared the story of the KO trees, he asked me if I knew a Japanese tradition you see here And what is the name of the tradition?

And I'll share that a little bit with you right now in a minute, which is this. The Japanese have this beautiful tradition that if a cup or a bowl or a glass breaks, it's not thrown away like it's useless, but it's knit and lacquered back together with gold. And the item becomes even more precious for the cracks because now you might have two bowls and those bowls look the same at one time, but the one that cracked, that you repaired with gold lacquer is even more beautiful than the one that just stayed the same because of the brokenness. And I think that is why the Eucharist is the greatest gift for the suffering and the wounded and the lost. And Merrick is going to sing with me this piece and I'll let you take it away at this time though, Merrick, all our lives are a mystery.

We can all sing together. Number 3 0 4, all around we see that we are asked now to trust you and we know we must be as Christ feet. We go forward with grace of the power and spirit that is

In the Eucharist. We hear the words too. This is my body given for you. And what does that mean? I have a great story to share with you about this. This is my daughter, Ava, when she was very little and I was invited to go on a pilgrimage and I was a nursing mom and I think we have to talk about this stuff sometimes. So I'm just going to share this with you. So I went on this pilgrimage and because I was a nursing mom, I had to continue to make milk for my baby, for my baby Ava who was at home. And this was very serious to me. Even though I was on pilgrimage in France, I had a cord and I was on a bus and I was going to make this work. Problem was I was on pilgrimage with priests and a bishop and oh, God's people, but a good friend of mine was the pilgrimage director.

And I said, father Dave, at some point regularly around 10 or two, you're going to see me go down the back of the bus where all the women are and I'm going to take a big poncho out and don't worry about what's going on down there. We're just hanging out. And so he never said anything. But about six days into the trip, the regularity of this was puzzling to him. And one day I couldn't go down the back of the bus because of an issue with the bathroom. So I had to sit up front with my poncho on as he sat opposite me. And he is sitting curiously wondering what this is going. And he goes, after the poncho was off, which must have been the magical signal for him to engage in conversation, he says to me, Hey Julianne, what's that sound? And I said, yeah, there's a little thing I have to do because Ava's at home.

And I thought that would be it. Like real gentle. Well what is it? And I said, he goes, because you know, put the poncho on you cover yourself up. And then I was starting to get a little embarrassed, but also feeling this was good education for the Holy Father. And I was like, well Father Dave, I am a nursing mom and I need to make milk for my baby. He still did not get it. Blank look. So I just gently told him what was happening and he was like, oh, I'm so sorry. He's like, he's an Irishman ground. Oh, open me up and swallow me. I feel terrible for asking. But also thank you. And I never want to think about this ever again in my entire life until we were at mass that day. And he said the words, this is my body given for you. And he looked right at me and he said, after the mass, I realize something today that if Jesus could say to us, this is my body given for you, it's because his mother, a woman gave her body first for him.

He's like, the Eucharist brings us all together, men and women. Our bodies are united in the Eucharist. And the only reason he could say that is because she had given her very body for him too. I never realized that. And then I said, do really want to know? Do you really want to know something fun about the Eucharist? Let me blow your mind right now. He goes, okay, I'm ready. I feel like after today I'm ready. I'm like the Eucharist, we get to receive the Eucharist for the first time ourselves. But do you know that Ava has already received the Eucharist? He goes, no. How? And I said, father, when you eat this body and drink this blood that goes into my body and it feeds her, my daughter is already a Eucharistic child because I take the Eucharist for her. And he was like, I need to lie down after this conversation and I need to have a whiskey.

So the Eucharist is so life giving. These are thoughts. Why don't we talk more about this? I don't know why we don't. It's so beautiful. So I'm going to share a quick little story with you. I'll come back to this miracle singers out. Oh, hang on, hang on. We'll come back. We'll come back. I'll tell you about this story in a minute here. Told this today. And then we're going to take this and then take some questions. When my mother passed away, it was very, very traumatic for me, for our family. She was young, she was very vibrant. It was lots of fun. I flew home from the US to be with her and she was dying. And I left my Ava and my children and went home to be with her in the last days of her life. And the last day she was semi-conscious and she could understand and she would not at the appropriate times, but she was in the next phase.

She was already crossing over to the thin place. But my husband had flown. He had, first of all, he had driven four hours with a 1-year-old and a 4-year-old and then flown eight hours by himself. And our village is an hour and a half from the airport. And he said to me, Julianne, I will do this for you, but please can you be there because I will be up for 27 hours and I am going to be exhausted. So I said to my mother, I love you. The doctor said you should be okay for a while. He said, your heart is strong.



I am going to go and get Wayne and the kids. I need to be there as a mom. And she nodded. And I told her I loved her and she mouthed the words, I love you too. And then I drove up and I got my kids and my husband was thrilled and grateful and relieved. And we drove home. And on the side of the road I stopped and we saw this round pottery thing waving in the wind on the side of the road. There were all these windmills and fun yard ornaments and everything. And I said, this is a good place to stop. Let's go. Let's get something to eat. Let's just change out the babies and then I want to buy this. He said, what is it? I said, I don't know. It's like some thing. It's a thing. So I went into the owner of the store and I said, what's that king out there that's waving in the wind? He said that joke. He said, nobody knows what those things are. Your man down the road makes them and we just sell 'em for him.

Wayne's like, is it like a bird feeder because it's round and you hang it outside? And he goes, no, there's holes in it. We don't really know what it's, so I bought it and I was thrilled myself. This is interesting. It has these little Celtic spirals up in this top area over there. And we spent about 12 minutes. It was very quick, 12 minutes in the store and we got on the road and about 12 minutes from my village, I got a phone call that my mother had died. I was so angry with myself and this thing became the focus of my anger and my guilt for not being there. And I hid away in a cabinet because every time I looked at it, I thought I was not there. I flew all the way home and I was not there when she needed me the most.

A couple of years went by and covid actually happened and I had the courage to pull it out and I held it in my hands and I said, ping, I don't know what you are, but my heart is heavy and I miss my mother so much and I am ready to lay down this ping and look at it with love. I don't know why, Lord, I wasn't there, but I know she didn't want me to be there. It happened the way you wanted. And peace settled into my heart. And then because I think in story, I decided to write this Facebook post and you can friend me on Facebook and write the story about the thing and said, I was ready to give up my grief because my grief was the thing that was preventing me from getting close to God. And somebody chimed in a community and said, that's not the thing.

The thing is your grief. The thing is round and round like the love you shared. And someone else responded and said, no, no, that's not the thing. The thing is the unbreakable bond between a mother and daughter. That's the thing. Someone else said, no, no, that's not the thing. The thing is the community that sustains us and keeps us together. And the last comment was the hole is the hole in your heart that was left when your mother died. But it is round like the Eucharist perfectly shaped for him to love you in that grief filled place that has been broken open and that he has healed.

That was transforming for me. That changed everything. And I thanked the Lord for giving me new life in that moment because until then I could not talk about that moment. But now I realized he cracked me open and he filled me and nipped me back together in a way that I can share with you so that new life can come into your heart. So my brother feels very far from the Lord. He feels that he would not be welcome in God's house. He would be welcome here. I know that. And he was very, very angry about my mother dying and said, how can you be faithful to a God who has rejected me?

My mother died on his 21st birthday, the baby of the family, the one she really loved and spoiled at, used to tease him about this all the time. But he stopped going to church during that time. He was so angry. But then one day he posted this picture that you see here on his Facebook page, and I thought, Lord, I really want to talk to him about this. But I am a Jesus loving woman and I do not want to drown him in the Oh, you have seen the way come with me. I sense that there's a crack of grace happening in his life. And so I said, Lord, please let me be zipped on the things that you do not want me to say. And let me say what you want me to say, but I have no idea what that is, so I'm just going to call 'em. And I did. And I called him and I said, so I saw the image on your Facebook page. And he said, oh, I had a feeling you were going to talk to me the church you want in my family. And this came out of my mouth and I know it was the Holy Spirit because I did not plan to say this at all. I said, I saw you. I said, then who is that on the bench with you? And he goes, well, you know who that is. You work for him.

I said, so I'm thinking that I just have to check. He was very prickly. I said, so that is Jesus. Yeah. And I said, that is you. And he said Yes. And he said, as you can see, there's a space between us because I am far from him. And I said, do you see that space? That's where our mother is sitting and she's holding both of you by the hand. And with that, he started to cry. And that was his journey to take one step back, one step back. That's all I can take for someone to be a seed of hope, is to invite them to take one step to see themselves not far from Jesus but close to him even if they don't always feel it. And on days when you feel very far from Jesus, there's a woman that can help us with this.

And it's the blessed mother. I'm going to give you a few minutes for questions after I shared this last story with you. I love the blessed mother. I think we portray her sometimes as meek and mild, which she was. But I think she was also fierce and fearless and I think she was incredible and strong and brave and I cannot imagine what she must have felt like at the foot of the cross, but journeyed with the other women to be there and not be afraid and run away and lock herself in an upper room. But to be there as a strong woman with the disciples. She was there at Pentecost. She was there at the foot of the cross. She was there with her son. So I wanted to get married on January 1st, which is the feast day of the mother of God. And so this is me on my wedding day under this little side.

It's actually very like this church is beautiful, but this little altar reminds me a little bit of this. And so this is me. And I wore a blue robe because I wanted to be a mother. I desperately wanted to be a mother. And so I was asking the blessed mother to help me and she will help you. She will really help you. Now little note about my husband, he is a little scavenger man. Now what do I mean by that? He's driving down the road and he's like, there's a path by the side of the road. And I'm like, leave it alone. He's like, we might use this. Or he goes to the city compost pile and he's like, look what I came back with a rock, a rock for the garden. He's like a magpie. He's always picking up things. Our house is the one with the garage that is stuffed with all the things that he might need to fix things.

And I will tell you the side thing here. When a man says, or a woman says they're going to Lowe's, you have Lowe's out here. And he says, I'll be in for a minute. It is a lie. It is a lie. A Lowe's minute is the longest minute in the history of minutes. So he goes and he dumps off stuff at the dump and he drives on his merry way. And one day he calls me and he goes, you're not going to believe what I got. And I went, where were you? He goes, I went to take the brush to the city dump. And I went, wait, you have to stop this. He goes, no, you're going to love it. You're going to love it so much. This is something you've always wanted. Wait for it. He drives up and there she's a statue of the blessed mother.

And I said, you did not get that at the city dump. And he said, I did. Which me So sad. And I said, where was she? Please don't tell me that the blessed mother was in the compost pile. He said, no. He said, when I drove into the dump, she was up on top of the wall. She was just waiting for me. And I know you've been waiting to get your, you don't, I did not want a resin. I wanted like the 1950s heavy duty Mary. So we took her out and we propped her up and my daughter said, she needs a makeover. She's got some eighties makeup rock in the blue eye shadow up to here. And I sat with it and I said, no, I'm going to clean her but I'm not going to take off. I'm not going to strip her. And my husband said, why?

And I said, because she was found in a dump. She bears the scars of being discarded. Of all the places that the blessed mother could have appeared, she appeared in a dump to you, which tells me that she's with us when life is going to discard us or dump on us, you can count on the blessed mother. So we put her out in the garden and thought no more about the blessed mother until a storm went by and our birch tree came down and took out the entire side of our yard. We were inches from missing our house. Not one but two trees came down and we went out and she was still standing a night one of this parish mission. We talked about Jesus in the storm to be that person of hope when the storm hits. Keep your eyes focused on Jesus but stay close to the blessed mother because she will stay with you and she will never let you fail. Fall or perish. There she is in my garden. She is the bearer of hope. She is the seed of new life. She's the one that says, I give you my body so that you can give to others. Do this in memory of me. And that's how I would conclude this parish mission by saying do this in memory of him and go out and share him as a seed of hope with so many hurting wounded people who feel discarded by life. God bless you. Thank you.

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