

³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping; he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴"Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. ³⁵Jesus wept. (John 11:33-35 NIV)

There is no more difficult time on our journey on this earth than when someone who is close to us dies. No matter when it happens, it is a loss, and for those who are especially close it can seem as if a significant part of us is missing.

While our Christian faith affirms the resurrection to eternal life for God's children, our heart, or human emotions can be a completely different matter. Where is God in such a sad time?

Jesus, in the scripture quoted above, came to see some of his closest friends, Mary, Martha, on the occasion of the passing of their brother, and also close friend of Jesus, Lazarus.

Now the entire chapter deals with Jesus actually raising Lazarus from the dead. However before that happens, he greets Mary and Martha, indeed hinting that he might do something. But even before that happens, we see the unique passage where Jesus himself grieves with all those there in the simple verse "Jesus wept".

If we believe that Jesus is God's Son, that passage helps us to see that God grieves along with us, supporting us along with way.

Secondly it also tells us that the right thing for Jesus to do was to "stand along side" the family in grief.

Many times we know should pay our respects when someone dies or support a co worker, fellow church member, or friend when someone close to them dies.

It can be an awkward time, since it's hard to know what to say, and of all times no one wants to put their "foot-in-their mouth", by saying something stupid or insensitive.

But by just being there, your presence whether you say something or not really means a lot to folk. In fact after the scriptures tells us that "Jesus wept" instantly the reflection comes back,"See how he loved Him" (verse 37)

When all is said and done a loved one, or being a friend, co-worker, neighbor, family member to someone's loved who died really hurts one way or the other. Nothing can escape that fact.

But to know that God is with us in grief helps move us in a good direction. When we share the ministry of presence we show support and encouragement which, even if it is a "baby step" helps move those who we know who are grieving in a positive way.

God's presence with us and our being messengers of God's presence. May the Holy Spirit remind us often of the power of both.

Pr. John Van Haneghan