

## 03/18/18 ..... 5Lent C

-- Sr. Margaret Funk is a Benedictine sister from the Indianapolis area. I've known her since about 1999. She attended the Midwest Muslim-Catholic Dialogue I participate in for several years. And she's written several books on Islam and on methods of prayer.

-- But until I picked up this little book at, of all places, the Wauseon Public Library, I knew nothing of an important part of her story. In the book *Into the Depths: A Journey of Loss and Vocation*, she describes an event which took place in 1984, when she was 40 years old.

-- She was in Bolivia visiting a missionary sister she knew when, on a trip to one of their mission stations, the Jeep in which she and five other people were travelling was swept away in a flash flood. Only she and the priest who was driving the Jeep survived. Her friend was one of the dead.

-- Before this event she had struggled with her direction in life and had dropped out of a doctoral program. This traumatic incident helped her reset her direction in life while persevering in her vocation as a nun.

-- But it didn't tie things up in a nice bow, so to speak. She continued to struggle with flashbacks and fears. Even as she was elected prioress of her monastery and became involved in interreligious work around the world she struggled with her fears and had to take anxiety medications.

-- Yet she had a spiritual awakening as she faced death in the waters of that river—one that was very hard to explain to people. That's why it took her about 25 years or more to go public with her story.

-- That awakening gradually caused her to go deeper into prayer. Her books on *Lectio Divina*, a way of reading and meditating on scripture, were a part of that process. She had to die to her focus on herself to experience a new life. And it didn't come overnight—it took a number of years.

-- Sr. Margaret's story illustrates to me what Jesus meant in this gospel when he said the seed must die in order to produce new life.

-- Few of us will have a near-death experience like she did. But, at one time or another, we will all be challenged to give up something dear to us in order to reach greater awareness of where God is leading us.

-- It may take place when we lose someone close to us in death. Other times it happens when we lose a job or position, or we may be rejected for some position we desperately want to take.

-- At those times in life we will face our limitations and our lack of control over events in life. We may also face the fact of our sinfulness—that we fall short of who God is asking us to be.

-- In these times, like the psalmist, we must admit our need for God's mercy and God's assistance. We must fall back on the immense love of a God who cares for us no matter how stubborn or broken we are.

-- We have a little less than two weeks left in this Lenten season. During this time, we ought to determine what we have to die to in ourselves. We may be holding back part of ourselves from God; we need to give that over to him.

-- Perhaps we need to come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, admit our sin, and experience God's healing power. There will be opportunities for that over the next week or two.

-- Sr. Margaret had to die to dreams of being a professor. She had to die to her anger at so many things in her life. God helped her through that process.

-- God will be there for us as well, when we resolve to die to anything that is holding us back from loving Him without condition.