



THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY

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The Basilica of Saint Mary



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Welcome

I am inspired on Holy Thursday, as I witness and experience the sacred act of washing one another's feet: All types of people of all ages being served, and kneeling in humble service. This year, my experience at Holy Thursday Mass was compounded when I connected with Jackie — a homeless woman I have known for close to twenty years (name changed for privacy). Jackie and her fiancé sat down in the pews, and I joined them.

When I first met Jackie, she was living with her children and sister under the highway directly across the street from The Basilica. They came to The Basilica every

homelessness. She is homeless again, and has cancer. She is in pain and afraid. As I held Jackie at Mass on Holy Thursday, she wept and repeated a question that she asks a lot lately, "*What should I do, Janice? What should I do?*"

As Jackie struggled with grief and despair that evening, my heart wanted to respond, "Love, Jackie. Love yourself, love your family, love your friends, love God." Ultimately, we are all called to love. Love: so easy to say, so hard to live.

Jackie is a good woman. She has a sparkle in her eye and a contagious laugh that exposes a deep joy amid

family. What will happen when she is gone?

Jackie asks a question we are all to ponder this Easter Season: *What are we to do?* When death and betrayal can be found around us each day, what will we do? What will mark our lives, our actions, our attitudes, our choices, our thoughts, and our assumptions? What difference will it make that we have been given the gift of new life through resurrection?

As we washed one another's feet, my experience with Jackie raised deep and difficult questions in my heart. Brought face-to-face with my own judgments, biases, and fears, I wrestled with reconciling the life I have watched Jackie live and my own actions — as well as the actions of our community.

What does love look like in our community? Our faith calls us to acts of charity and justice. We are called to hold Jackie when she is afraid. And, we are also called to advocate for more affordable housing. This may be the harder part. There are not enough shelter beds, and not



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enough affordable housing in our community to protect Jackie and her family. We must join the advocacy efforts of Minnesota Coalitions for the Homeless and St. Stephen's Human Resources to provide safe and secure housing options.

Pope Francis encourages us to "Let the joyous wonder of Easter Sunday radiate through your thoughts, looks, attitudes, gestures, and words." Let us be inspired by Jackie, and live a life of joy through charity and justice.

*"Ultimately we are all called to love.
Love: so easy to say, so hard to live."*

morning. I could smell gasoline on their bodies — gasoline, seeping down from cars passing overhead on highway 94, being absorbed by their bodies and clothes.

Over these twenty years, Jackie and her family have experienced frequent

incredible suffering. Deeply committed to her family, she has witnessed tragedy since she was a child, moving to Minneapolis from the Red Lake Reservation. She knows tremendous grief, having lost several children to death on the street. She is a matriarch to a struggling

OUR VISION:

Seek the well-being of the city to which I have sent you. Pray for it to the Lord. For in seeking its well-being, you shall find your own.

— Jeremiah 29:7