

Good Friday Reflection – April 13, 2017

This is a cascarón. We use these in our egg hunts on Easter Sunday in South Texas where I grew up. We collect the empty egg shell during Lent. Paint and stuff them with confetti, readying them for the moment, when they are all found, and become weaponized--cracked on the heads of anyone within reach, spilling out their contents. Its really like bursting a piñata on someone's head. There is much chasing and screaming and inevitably tears. The process is messy, can be painful, and always beautiful---by the end we are all disheveled and crowned with bits of painted egg shell and masses of confetti—it's one of my fondest memories—what I didn't know then was that this Easter tradition, this cascarón, was also a clue.

Years and years would pass after the Easter egg hunts of my youth before I would begin to get an inkling of what the cascarón illustrated and how Jesus' suffering and death could provide a way to understand my life.

Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit priest, once urged each one of us to “fall in love, stay in love and it will decide everything.” Apart from my spouse, the great loves of my life are our three children. Being in relationship with them, loving them has decided almost everything. Decisions were guided by the reality that I was a mom, that little people, then older people, depended and relied on me. Soon I came to see that becoming a mom was both the best and the worst thing that has ever happened to me. There is a blinding, all-encompassing love and its companion--heartache.

The heartache and losses came like passing storms...when my daughter was betrayed by her best friend, and when I heard the specialist say my son had multiple learning disabilities, and when a tender heart was broken by a first love.

But there were also the tsunamis... when the counselor told me my daughter was anorexic, and years later when I sat with my

depressed, hopeless son trying to convince him his life was worth living.

Those were moments of great loss, the death of dreams...Dreams of lasting health and well-being and unending happiness—of that easy, smiling Facebook life everyone else seems to have. Instead I was consumed with deep desires of finding wholeness again.

We don't often speak these desires aloud because they betray our secret---that everything is not okay. They are conversation stoppers, the stuff of pity and shame that we weren't able to do better, much less be perfect.

It becomes a temptation as a parent to look the other way when bad stuff is happening, to stuff feelings behind cupboard doors and sweep truths under rugs. I gave into that temptation often. I explained away my daughter's precipitous weight loss as "stretching out." I told myself that my son was just moody and having a little difficulty adjusting to a new city.

But those lies, that resistance to the truth-- to what was happening right before me—that resistance to my life--prolonged our suffering.

But this was the problem: Could I risk being destroyed by accepting the truth and feeling all the pain? Did I have the courage to ask God, as Jesus had, to be with me...with us... in our pain?

Eventually by Divine Grace, I was able to ask myself the question that Jesus asked Peter in the Garden: Shall I not drink the cup the Father gave me? Shall I not accept *my* life exactly as it is?

And by more Divine Grace, I invited my weakened, fragile daughter to climb into bed with me one day. I held her and we cried...And I found the way to sit at my beautiful boy's bed and tell him that the world would be a much, much smaller place without him in it.

I want to suggest to you that one idea that the Divine is sharing with us through the suffering and death of Jesus is that the risk is worth it---and not just worth it—necessary—essential---in order to receive greater freedom and new life---because the day will come, as the

poet Anais Nin said so beautifully: when the risk to remain tight in a bud (is) more painful than the risk it (takes) to blossom.

These days when I prepare my cascarones (because I still do even though my children are all grown.)...I see something of Divine surprises and possibilities beyond my greatest imaginings. Even though I know that my family, like the cascarón, can never be put back together exactly as it was before---somehow we have been wrapped up in the Paschal Mystery and led to a beautiful, messy type of wholeness.

And so I ask you...Is there a place in your life right now that is dying to live? Are you ready to ask the Divine One to help you take the cup that is before you?