

Pastoral Prayer 4-2-17 – Lent 5
By Rev. Casey G. Baggott
Community Church of Vero Beach
based on John 11:1-44, The raising of Lazarus

God of life and light and hope, how grateful we are for the blessings of our lives, including the blessings of sharing Christ's presence through bread and cup today. May the holy meal stretch the boundaries of our hearts, that we might hold more of your generosity, your compassion, your goodness, and your love.

Today we remember the simple, stunning Gospel phrase: Jesus wept. Knowing by those words, that compassion and sympathy are attitudes of divine significance, we ask that we might grow to feel as strongly as Jesus did, for the hurts and hardships of others. Let us dare to care so fully that we risk the discomfort of loss, and chance paying some personal cost, through our caring, as Christ did. Help us train our voices to echo Christ's call to new beginnings, that we might encourage others in their trust of you. For we do trust that all loss is finally swept away in your vast design, and all our calculations of cost to benefit must be computed with your goals in mind, and not simply our own. As Christ's followers, we cannot but admit, that when even death is overcome by your indomitable will for life, we risk little in following in Christ's path, day by day by day.

So teach us, O God, how not to die to life before our time. Help us to heed Christ's call and refrain from fearfully entering tombs of our own making when we encounter loss and pain and discouragement. Give us the help we need to disinter our aching, hurting selves, and let us trust in your power to call us forth to new life and fresh beginnings, again and again and again, trusting that love wins, your love that does not pamper us, but perfects us..

We can trust you, O God, for we have witnessed your compassion. Jesus wept. Jesus called. Lazarus came out to him. Let us hear and come today.

We pray in gratitude for the voice of the One that calls us to new life. And using Jesus' words, we sing together ... *Lord's Prayer*.