

## FROM THE RECTOR

I've wept many times reading Cindy's letter and therefore I placed it first in this month's newsletter.

Unfortunately, I have seen no cardinals, no angels, nor heard a voice from heaven. I'm in my own bleak mid-winter of grief. I cannot express the deep, deep pain in my heart after losing the love of my life. Although only married for eight years, Cindy+ and I knew each other since 1993 and became best friends in 1999.

She was the preacher at my ordination to the priesthood on Martin Luther King Day in the year 2000. It was about 5 degrees that day and Cindy+ began her sermon with the following words, "We all knew it'd be a cold day in hell when Eric Zile was ordained priest. Well, here we are!" The congregation roared with laughter, as everyone knew of the resistance to my irregular ordination and of course my personality. That was a great day! It was seventeen years ago but it seems like last week.

Cindy's death has shaken me to the core and I am dazed and confused, lost without her, and feel meaningless without having her to care for. For five of the last eight years I cared for her. For the last three, caring for her was a second full time job. Since November 30<sup>th</sup>, it has been my primary focus. And yet, I have absolutely no regrets. I would suffer twice this pain to have had her for half that time, or half that time over. Our love was a deep, joyful, and mature love. She made me a better me and I her.

In the years that we've known each other, she taught me how to become a better cook and I taught her how to laugh. It came in handy as one Thanksgiving when Cindy's recipe for cranberry sauce called for celery and by mistake I put in onion. It tasted awful but we laughed. She never let me forget about it. Every Thanksgiving afterward she'd ask, "Do you have enough ONION for the cranberry sauce?"

I'm sure that each of you knows how much I loved her. It should therefore come as no surprise that I miss her so much. She was the idealized woman I had dreamed of marrying - funny, beautiful, smart, spiritual, and filled with awe and joy of God's creation. It took forty years to really come to know her and I give thanks that God put us together for the last few years of her life.

I have walked with many of you through this type of grief and I know that I will heal. I also know that each of us grieves in our own way and in our own time; therefore, I ask your patience with me, as I do not know what the future will bring.

With each death, we relive all those that have gone before. Cindy+, my daughter Karen, my first wife Linda and my daughter-like niece Danae, all died in January. And as you no doubt remember, my mother died on Easter Eve two year ago. Many wonderful and painful memories have been dragged from the depth of my soul and placed in the forefront of my heart and mind ---- and I find myself rudderless.

I now ask God and you to guide me back toward wholeness. I keep forgetting things and losing things and cry at the drop of a hat. But as I said earlier, I know not what the future has in store, but I do know that God will lead me through this valley of the shadow of death and will once again experience joy. In the meantime, know that I am praying for all of you and giving thanks for your never failing support throughout this ordeal.

I am your í

Servant and His

*Eric +*