

E-DEVOTION FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 18

This past week, there have been many stories about grandparents finally being able to hug their grandchildren after receiving the second vaccination. Just a few weeks ago, we had the pleasure of meeting our daughter and granddaughter at the airport in Tucson with GREAT BIG HUGS! And at the end of this week, we will be standing at the bottom of our driveway with open arms as the other three 'grands' pull up to our very door. We will be ready to HUG!

It's been a long, hard time for many people. Those stories of long-awaited hugs are beautiful. Maybe you've seen the video of the grandmother and granddaughter who just couldn't seem to let each other go. In Ecclesiastes, it even says... *"there is a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing."*

Well, time is up for me! Pre-covid, when friends would arrive for a meal, or when we would see our extended family, a tight hug was assured! But we haven't done that for a year and thankfully if we are careful... the time to embrace is eminent.

When I reflect on those tight hugs, I can't help but find myself thinking of all those 550,000+ family members who most likely didn't have the moment of that final embrace. This virus has taken its toll, for sure. And then I also think of those women who visited the empty tomb on Easter morning. Most likely, they didn't have the chance for that final embrace with Jesus. So they made their way to do the next best thing. They were there to tend to his body. But the tomb was empty! It appears their final act of service was denied.

Shock upon shock! They met who they thought was maybe just a gardener. But it was the Lord. Hugging wasn't an option, but even without that physical touch... they felt His love and His presence. We can identify. We have been here for one another in so many varied ways this past year. Just as we cannot feel the physical touch of the Crucified Christ... we know in the bread and the wine... His Presence.

Please share, as you are able, in our Holy Week services starting with Palm Sunday on March 27. And keep on washing your hands, fold them, bow your heads, and feel His presence as we walk these final steps to the cross.

Pray with me: "Dear Lord, we are thankful for each embrace. For the love of family and good friends who have helped us on our way through these long days. Open our hearts and our minds to the message of Holy Week as we look ahead to the glory of Easter. Amen, In Jesus' Name, Amen."