

**Liturgy of the Word Reflection – Margaret Lorenger’s Funeral**  
**Tuesday, May 26, 2020**  
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Think of an earthenware jar, an earthen vessel. In one of the translations of today’s reading, the reference is to a clay pot. This container, often used in early days, was a way of holding a precious, fragile object. As we heard in Paul’s message to the Corinthians, we are earthenware jars. Today we celebrate Margaret Lorenger’s life. She imagined her life as such a container, carrying the precious gift of the Gospel message.

We are reminded in the reading from Corinthians that God’s hand and presence with us continues in our lives and God gifts us with the graces we need at any particular time. Such was true in Margaret’s life. Margaret led her life faithful to God’s call on her journey. We celebrate that today and give thanks for the ways in which she was faithful to the IHM mission.

In the same reading, cited in Margaret’s Remembering, we are told that we will face challenges and hardships. I am sure that Margaret may have faced some difficulties in her life; but she remained faithful to God’s call. Margaret shared her gift of music in her various ministries, whether in the classroom or in a parish. I would guess that it was that gift of music that led her through difficult times, recognizing that God’s power within her could do more than she could ask or imagine.

During these past months, we, like the disciples, have been staying in place. We are finding ourselves during the time of the pandemic facing some difficult times, hardships that Paul talks about in his letter. We may be knocked down, yet in the readings today we are reminded of God’s presence in our lives. As an earthen vessel, we are called at this time to make known the precious message, the Gospel message, in a new way.

During this post-Easter time, the readings speak to us of what is in the hearts of the disciples. Jesus’ death, resurrection, and now his ascension were times that must have left the followers of Jesus wondering. They felt alone and gathered in an upper room, wondering about the mystery of all that had happened. They felt a loss yet they had a sense of hope. The experience of the presence of Jesus, their teacher, is still fresh in their hearts. The followers of Jesus remember his message, and, in their hearts, they want to go forth and bring that message to the people. Yes, they hesitate; they lack the courage, the security to move forward without the presence of Jesus with them. The disciples hold the promise of Jesus that he will be with them always, yet it must have been hard to believe that as they felt alone.

At times, we feel the same as we wonder about an unknown future—will we return to normal, to activities and ways of being together that we cherish? Our lives are different as we take precautions against a virus that touches our brothers and sisters around the world. Like the disciples, we are locked in our upper room, awaiting the gift of the Spirit to lead us in new ways.

During these days, we hear in John's Gospel, the message Jesus gave at the Last Supper. In this reading from John's Gospel, as Jesus is speaking to his disciples, he shifts to a prayer in which he expresses unity with God and belief in community. In this prayer, Jesus raises his eyes to heaven and says, "God, the hour has come." In the midst of the challenges that face us, we recognize the gift of this hour as Jesus invites us to make visible the presence of God in our lives. Jesus speaks of eternal life. Eternal life in this context is an invitation to knowledge of God, the invitation to a deeper relationship with God. Hopefully, we have grown in our relationship with God during this time, an intimate relationship that comforts us and also gives us the strength to go forward.

We have been on a journey these months as we deal with the global pandemic of COVID. Sure, we would like to move on, to choose to leave this behind us. While we may not have experienced personal suffering during this time, we mark it with awareness of the suffering of our sisters and brothers throughout the world. This virus knows no boundaries as it touches everyone. We have had our trials as we've experienced limitations and restrictions. As earthen vessels, let us hold the treasure within, recognizing our present reality; and, even more challenging, let us see a blessing in all of this. We are beginning to re-enter, hopefully, a new way.

In John's Gospel, Jesus reflects on his life. "I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do." Margaret's life gave glory to our loving God. She lived her life faithful to God's call, whether it was in the classroom, as a part of the formation team or in a parish. Margaret, through her life and ministries, made God's name known to those whose lives she touched.

We celebrate Margaret's life and we also recognize the call of this time. Let us make the name of God known as we travel from this time of isolation to be community in a new way as we go forth. As we do so, we are called to remember a lesson from Margaret's life—we are earthen vessels and hold a treasure deep within to share in new ways.