

Holy Saturday

April 11, 2020

A Love We Can Count On

by The Rev. Heidi Haverkamp

Every Holy Saturday morning in one of my former parishes, as in many churches, a group of willing workers gathered to reset our sacred space from Holy Week to Easter. Soon, we'd hear vacuums roar, ladders clack, furniture groan, and flowers slosh around by the bucketful. But first, we sat in our work clothes in silence to take in the heavy pause of the tomb, the corpse, and the stone. We sat together for a moment in the empty nave and to say the Holy Saturday liturgy in the prayer book.

Of course, as we did this, we knew that Resurrection was coming soon. We could smell the heavy fragrance of lilies, waiting in their waxy boxes in the hallway. We knew that the Alleluia banner was “buried” under the choir loft and that the kids would find it the next day. We saw the full-color Easter bulletins waiting in piles by the door. We sat in that solemn pause, but we knew with our whole bodies what was coming soon.

But that is not always the case.

My father called me one Sunday before seven on a hot July morning a few years ago. He was in the ICU with my mother, who had collapsed in the middle of the night. As my husband and I drove across town to the hospital, I thought, “Today, I may become a person whose mother is dead.”

There are pauses of uncertainty and dread in human life; times we aren't sure what the ending will be or what resurrection could mean.

In the weeks following my mother's death, I felt adrift. What would come next? Who was I without my mother here on earth? Where was she, exactly? If she was “with God,” what did that mean? Did I believe in “heaven”? How could I find the courage to face so much gaping uncertainty and loss?

