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Holy week will only be holy if we are awake and don't take the familiar texts and rituals for granted, like there is nothing new to learn or experience. It will be holy to the extent we focus on the paschal mystery, Jesus' story, our story and the world's story. Dying and rising are happening everywhere. We pray for the heart consciousness to see it, experience it and work to bring new life out of death. Jerusalem is our destiny, even though we can't see the end.

We began this journey yesterday with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Jesus spoke God's word and showed God's unconditional, faithful and inclusive love. He proclaimed the need for religious and social reform that reflected God's dream for the world. Jesus was willing to stand up for his beliefs, whatever the consequences.

Martha, Mary and Lazarus heard his message and made it their own. Amid the fickleness of crowds and the vindictiveness and hatred of some religious leaders, Jesus finds welcome, care, sanctuary and acceptance with these dear friends. They chose to stay connected and did not abandon Jesus, even though there is a growing plot to kill Lazarus because his life gives testimony that God's power is at work in Jesus. This threatens the religious authorities.

Martha and Mary have learned from Jesus and are able to break with convention in terms of traditional women's roles. The meal and anointing are acts of devotion, love and thanksgiving for the raising of Lazarus. Jesus sees the anointing as a preparation for his burial. Jesus will repeat this gesture at the Last Supper by washing his disciples' feet.

At this meal, Jesus is the guest and Martha and Mary are the ministers who serve him. They do not ask permission from anyone but act on their own authority. They have stepped outside the dominant patriarchal culture to respond in love to Jesus. They are women, and they are disciples.

Adam Bucko, an Episcopal priest, asks, "What narratives have shaped us and are shaping us? Jesus' disciples will be caught up in love and drawn out of the world's illusions. We must say no to violence, greed, or power that exploits and destroys. And we must do it even when it costs us---because that is what it means to live in truth."

Does our relationship with Jesus impel us to act from the narrative of servant leadership expressed in Isaiah and lived by Jesus? Are we willing to relinquish the benefits of being part of the dominant religious and civil culture, if living Gospel values demands that of us? Will we offer radical hospitality as did Jesus' friends, regardless of the risks or the consequences?

Henri Nouwen frames our challenge in this way. "At this moment, we are being called to act in the name of Jesus to free humanity from the power of death and open the way to eternal life. To be such a leader, it is essential to discern from moment to moment how God acts in human history and how the personal, communal, national, and international events that occur during our lives can make us more sensitive to how we are led to the cross and through the cross to the resurrection."

Martha and Mary remained faithful to their relationship with Jesus. Jesus remained faithful to his Abba and risked everything to be a welcoming presence of God's love. What am I, what are you, what are we ready to risk being faithful to Jesus and the Gospel?