

There is one particular sentence that Jesus spoke to his disciples on his last night with them, this night of the last supper and his arrest that is particularly powerful. It is this: "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

You may have come to notice in your own life that God often works in mysterious ways in our lives and in the wider world that we cannot possibly understand at the moment. In fact, we may not understand what God is doing for a very long time, but eventually, whether that be here on earth or even after death, I truly believe with faith that we will eventually come to understand. "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

As a little girl like most children, I often did not understand the actions and prohibitions that were set by my parents. They seemed to me at that young age to have a lot of irrelevant rules that I did not appreciate and sometimes I thought they were downright ridiculous. One such rule was that my younger sister and I were not allowed to swim alone. Now I had learned to swim at the age of 3 and I could out-swim my peers at a very young age, I took to water like a fish. By the age of 8, I really didn't feel the need to keep that rule. And it was around that time that we moved to a new house that had a pool in the backyard: my sister and I were thrilled at the chance to swim every day! So one afternoon while my mother was busy finishing preparing the house for our move, my sister and I managed to convince her that we should be allowed to break that rule and swim for a while by ourselves. My mother was exhausted and very busy and so she gave in to our pleas. We ran outside elated, ready to jump into our new pool.

Having never swam in this particular pool before however, I didn't think much about the way it was built: while one side had a low edge to it, close to the surface of the water, the other side had a very tall edge that was several feet high, far from the water's surface. This fact eluded me until the moment I jumped into the water from the diving board. I sank all the way down to the deep bottom and then sprang back up. When I surfaced, I found myself at the side of the pool with the ledge that was too high to reach. I grasped for it and missed it and sank back, I reached again and missed it and sank back down, and then I realized that I was never going to reach

that ledge, it was too high for my short arms. This realization sent me into a panic: instead of simply swimming to another part of the pool, I became convinced in my young mind that I was trapped in that water. I started to sink and take in water. The more I thrashed about in panic, the more panicked I became. I screamed for my little sister but she couldn't reach me either. Again, in this moment of panic, neither of us had the good sense that a grown adult would have had: to simply swim to the other side of the pool. Finally my sister ran into the house hysterical and found my mother. By the time she arrived, I had swallowed water and believe I would have drowned had she not come when she did. She reached down and grabbed me. I came out, coughing and shaking. I remember looking at my mother as she shouted, "This is why I don't allow you to swim by yourself!" And so I finally understood all too well why that rule was in place. Maybe, I thought, my parents aren't as dumb as I think they are. Maybe those "No's" and prohibitions are for my good.

As a mother today, there are many times that I have to discipline or prevent my own children from doing something that disappoints them terribly: they cry and don't understand why the boundaries are being set, but one day I believe they will. The latest struggle has been with my 18 month old who is convinced she can and should be able to ride her four wheeled trike barefoot. Inevitably she skins her toes if she doesn't have her shoes on, but that doesn't prevent her from having a wily tantrum whenever I take her off and insist she put shoes on. Still, one day, my kids will know that all the frustrating things I do regularly was something I did for the sake of love, just as my parent's rules were made out of love and concern for me and my siblings.

As an adult, I am still learning this lesson from God. Because often the events of my life don't make any sense to me – "Why" I think, "would God allow this suffering and pain?" "Why doesn't God grant me my prayer requests?" Why is the answer "no"? And I have often said to God, "Lord, you don't make any sense to me today." But over time I have come to truly believe that God doesn't do things arbitrarily in our lives. God is not a roller of the dice with our destinies. God acts, as Jesus did on that Maundy Thursday night so long ago, in very intentional ways. Just because we don't understand what God is up to doesn't mean there is not a good reason or that we

won't eventually understand. I have to remind myself that my mind is finite, it is God's whose is infinite. I have to stop myself from saying, "God, it looks like you could use some help, here....allow me."

Peter felt this way when Jesus knelt down to wash his feet that night so long ago at the Last Supper. For a free person to wash someone else's feet meant that they were taking on the role of a slave. And so Peter's objection is totally understandable: "No way Lord! Not my feet!" How could he let his teacher and Master act in this way? He didn't understand what Jesus was doing... later he would. Peter could not even begin to fathom that evening that he would very soon be denying Jesus and that if his relationship to Jesus was not understood as a pure gift of love, as sheer grace, then he would not make it past that incident and be able to embrace the forgiveness being offered to him despite it. This message of love had to be made clear from Jesus, no matter how strange or inappropriate it seemed in that moment.

And Jesus' strange teaching didn't stop at foot washing. That night was also the night of the Last Supper, what we now understand as the institution of Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper: the Eucharist. Just as Jesus would stoop and become a lowly servant to wash feet, soon he would be the lowly servant that dies on our behalf. The bread and the wine were about to become his literal Body and Blood, poured out for us and for all of us on the cross, for the forgiveness of sins. It made little sense to the disciples at the time, but later it became very clear why he did what he did. He wanted to prepare them for the crucifixion and give them something to hold on to as they watched him die: the promise that "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

This promise is for all of us, whatever you may be going through in your life right now. Lay hold to the promise that Jesus offers you tonight: "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." May this faith carry and sustain you as you continue your journey to the cross and back.

Amen.