

"Jesus wept."

As a child in church school I learned that
that was the shortest verse in the Bible.

It was easy to memorize – and it captured my imagination.

I suppose Biblical translations have become more precise over the years,
so the version children would learn today is a bit longer, but the meaning just the same:
“Jesus began to weep” at the death of his friend Lazarus.

But not only that.

Jesus “was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved”
when he saw the sisters Martha and Mary, and their friends, mourn Lazarus.

Jesus wept out of his *own* love and sorrow,
but also out of empathy with the love and sorrow of others.

And that's what we're about today.
Honoring those we mourn
by entrusting their names to be said aloud for and with one another.

But we'll not stop there.

We'll honor some of the beloved most recently killed in a world gone mad with hate.
We'll pray the names of two African-Americans killed while shopping
at a Kentucky Kroger's,
only because their killer had tried and failed to get into a predominantly black church
to wreak his hateful havoc.

We'll pray the names of the eleven faithful killed during worship last week
at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.

We'll pray each of their names because we follow someone named Jesus –
a dark-skinned, Jewish Rabbi – who *wept*,
and who *worked* to put empathy into action in this world God so loves.

In The Litany of the Saints,
let's say all these names and more boldly right out-loud.
As the bells toll, walk up from your pews as you would for communion.

Come toward the light --
the Paschal Candle first lit on Easter Eve,
the celebration of the life, death and resurrection of Christ Jesus –
on which we proclaim that love is stronger than hate,
and life transcends death.

Then pick a few leaves from the basket
and let us hear the names of our loved ones, *our saints*,
said aloud once more.

It doesn't much matter if the name is said at this service or the other,
or even if it's perfectly pronounced.

It's the empathy that matters.

The love we express for and with one another is what matters.

The love God has placed in our hearts, even for those we'll never know.

in the end, that's all that matters.

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