

A REFLECTION BY FR HENRI NOUWEN READ AT A BEREAVEMENT MASS EARLIER THIS YEAR

Do not hesitate to love and to love deeply.
You might be afraid of the pain that deep love can cause.
When those you love deeply reject you, leave you, or die,
your heart will be broken.

But that should not hold you back from loving deeply.
The pain that comes from deep love makes your love ever more fruitful.
It is like a plough that breaks the ground to allow the seed to take root
and grow into a strong plant.

Every time you experience the pain of rejection, absence or death,
you are faced with a choice.

You can become bitter and decide not to love again
or you can stand straight in your pain
and let the soil on which you stand become richer
and more able to give life to new seeds.

The more you have loved and allowed yourself to suffer
because of your love,
the more you will be able to let your heart grow wider and deeper.

When your love is truly giving and receiving
those whom you love will not leave your heart
even though they depart from you.

Those you have deeply loved become part of you.
The longer you live there will always be more people
to be loved by you and to become part of your inner community.

The wider your inner community becomes,
the more easily you will recognise
your own brothers and sisters in the strangers.

Those who are alive within you
will recognise those who are alive around you.

The wider the community of your heart,
the wider the community around.
Thus, the pain of rejection, absence and death
can become fruitful.

Yes, as you love deeply the ground of your heart
will be broken more and more,
but you will rejoice
in the abundance of fruit it will bear.