

## Pastor's Column

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### "The Holy Longing – Part I"

(Fr. Ron Rolheiser begins his book, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, with a poem, "The Holy Longing," by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

In April, I invited parishioners to share their thoughts as to how this poem spoke to them.

Enjoy the many and diverse thoughts! May they help you in your daily prayer and reflection.)

#### "The Holy Longing"

*"Tell a wise person, or else keep silent,  
Because the massman will mock it right away.  
I praise what is truly alive,  
what longs to be burned to death.*

*In the calm water of the love-nights,  
where you were begotten, where you have begotten,  
a strange feeling comes over you  
when you see the silent candle burning.*

*Now you are no longer caught  
in the obsession with darkness,  
and a desire for higher love-making  
sweeps you upward.*

*Distance does not make you falter,  
now, arriving in magic, flying  
and finally, insane for the light,  
you are the butterfly and you are gone.*

*And so long as you haven't experienced  
this: to die and so to grow,  
you are only a troubled guest  
on the dark earth.*

**Gale Gibbons** shares these thoughts: "And so long as you haven't experienced this: to die and so to grow, you are only a troubled guest on the dark earth."

The conclusion of this poem has resonated in me for the past month. It speaks to me of sacrifice...of Christ's sacrifice...of my call to sacrifice...to deny my self, my stuff, so that others might live.

The poem has called me, not to ponder on what I have done or accomplished, but on what needs to be done in my community and in my Church.

First, my community: I grew up as a daughter of a Marine who served in the Korean War and the War in Vietnam. I am well aware of the sacrifices we made as a military family...the looming fear...the separations...the struggle to make ends meet.

As the Marine Corps hymn states: "First to fight for right and freedom, and to keep our honor clean." We lived with the awareness that we live and die for our country.

Despite my upbringing and despite living so close to Camp Pendleton, it seems we have become disengaged, desensitized to with what our military families in our community are living and with what they are struggling.

Do I, as a civilian, share in the sacrifice as well? Do I continue to go on my own merry way, while other families are burdened with shouldering extra responsibilities? Does life continue to "go on?"

Secondly, my Church: Aware of the issues with which our local Church is struggling, I recognize that I too am a sinful creature. As a Church community, both locally and globally, we carry the sinfulness of all our members.

Can I die to my own frustrations, my own selfishness to hold on to "what I didn't do..." to put my money where my mouth is?

Do I have the courage to continue to die to all of this for the betterment of the faith in which I believe....the Catholic Faith?

In conclusion, this poem caused me to ask the question. As a youth minister, I encourage our young people to become "thinking Catholics." This reflection has done just that.

Sometimes, the questions are more important than the answers.