

SoulSpace

SERIES: EASTER PEOPLE

Season colour: **WHITE**

In this series, **Gerard Moloney CSsR** explores the meaning of Easter and what it means to be an Easter people.

Things were looking up for her. And then something happened that changed her life. She accepted an offer of a free trip to Spain, expecting a 10-day party in the sun.

But she was terribly disappointed when she discovered it wasn't a holiday by the pool she'd signed up for but a pilgrimage with mostly middle-aged women and rosary beads.

"I tried to get out of it," she said, "but my name was already on the ticket, so I had to go."

And off she went, with the middle-aged women and the rosary beads. She ended up staying in a monastery run by an order of nuns she had never heard of, called the Sister Servants of the Home of the Mother.

Something stirred in Clare while she was there. She felt a desire to be part of this group of women. She discovered a religious vocation. And that 10-day holiday turned into a lifelong journey.

A couple of years later, she became Sr Clare Crockett and was assigned to the South American country of Ecuador to teach and work with the poor.

In April 2016, just over a year ago, Sr Clare was giving guitar lessons in her school in the coastal town of Playa Prieta when a powerful earthquake struck. As she was guiding her pupils from the building, the stairwell they were standing on collapsed. Clare and her companions were crushed to death.

She was 33 years old.

Why did she do it? Why would a party-loving, ambitious young actress from a first world country become a nun in a Spanish-speaking, poverty-stricken country on the equator? Why would a talented teenager with everything to live for do what many would consider to be a very foolish thing? She was responding to the command of Jesus in today's Gospel. "Love one another

as I have loved you... A person can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends."

THOUSANDS OF GESTURES

So what about us? Most of us won't be leaving home to become missionaries in far-flung places like Ecuador. We're not going to be called to put our lives on the line out of love. So how do we respond to today's Gospel? How can we love one another as Jesus loved?

By letting go of selfishness, of self-interest. There are thousands of little gestures I can make every day that convey the love of Christ.

Being truthful – even when a little lie would get me out of a sticky situation.

Practicing patience – when a sick or elderly family member needs help to go to the bathroom for what seems like the hundredth time that day.

Offering forgiveness – when a person I care about hurts or upsets or betrays me yet again.

Spending time – with someone no one else will listen to, or who seems withdrawn or moody or in trouble.

Showing compassion – to that homeless person squatting by the side of the street that passers-by pretend is not there.

Casting aside prejudice or the tendency to judge others – the person in the hijab, the gay couple holding hands, the tattoo-covered youth with a big nose ring.

There's nothing sappy or sentimental about Jesus' words in today's Gospel. Love one another, he says. But not just any kind of love. Love till it hurts. Love without cost. The kind of love Clare Crockett showed in extraordinary abundance. ■



Today's readings

Acts

10:25-26.34-35.44-48

1 John 4:7-10

John 15:9-17

The church is not a democracy! So we are reminded from time to time.

It is easy to think of the church as an institution, a hierarchical structure. However, our Gospel reading recently presented us with the vision of the vine and the branches; living, fruitful and interdependent. The expression used in the official teaching of the church is the People of God, within whom ordained ministers have their place.

In this time between Easter and Pentecost we are invited to reflect on our choice to be a member of the People of God, a disciple of Jesus, that choice which we reaffirmed at the Easter Vigil or on Easter Sunday. The Gospel today reminds us that to be a Christian does not simply mean having been baptised: it involves a personal relationship with Jesus which should manifest itself in a fruitful Christian life. In some ways, it can be more comfortable to envisage the church as an institution because then we can minimise our responsibility for its life and mission.

Perhaps between now and Pentecost we might all reflect on what it means to be a disciple among disciples and how we can make our local church more of a communion.

GOD'S WORD TODAY

CLARE CROCKETT - 1982-2016



LOVE WITHOUT COST

There are thousands of little gestures I can make every day that convey the love of Christ. Clare Crockett wasn't shy to admit that she loved to have fun. "I liked to party a lot," said the Derry native. "My weekends, since I was 16/17, consisted of getting drunk with my friends. I wasted all my money on alcohol and cigarettes."

Ever since she was very young she had wanted to be an actress and she wrote and acted in local theatre productions before securing a small part in the film *Bloody Sunday*.

