

Was Jesus on Hospice?

Three weeks from Ash Wednesday now...

when crosses of ash dust are spread
on devout foreheads...

"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust..."

The rash and rowdy and irreligious

prefer "Fat Tuesday"...
a last hurrah before the dying scene.

Inside Christendom since Middle Ages

Lent journeys believers along with Jesus toward Jerusalem
where he had told his friends he would soon die.

His would be yet another cross on the hillside

along with many others who dared defy Rome
and were routinely deemed dangerous rebels
deserving the harshest capital punishment.

Faithful friends refused the thought that he would die...

"Forbid it Lord. This shall never happen to you"...
in denial as we all tend to be when we hear
that a friend is going on Hospice.

We know hard words have been received...

words we heard last Sunday in Brahms Requiem...

"All flesh is grass...the grass fades and withers..."

"Lord teach me that my life must come to an end..."

When dying friends let us know they know they are dying

we have been brought into their story....
sort of like followers of Jesus were invited into his story
as poorly prepared as they were for Hospice work.

Sometimes friends can't bear the cost of friendship

just as Jesus' friends slept during a night of his agony
or ran away from his dying time except for the women...
leaving Jesus who took death without medicated wine.

The Brahms baritone's words about the dying are still in my ears:

*"The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God
and no torment shall trouble them..."*

They are OK.

The Brahms soprano's words are for those of us left behind...

"Now you have sorrow...I will comfort you, as one's mother comforts him."

We will be OK as well.

I'm not likely to observe the traditional Christian practice of Lent...

but I've been along on that fateful journey time and time again...
and this season my heart is already following the Hospice path
with some good friends far ahead on the Jerusalem road.

I once resigned from the Hospice founding committee in Corvallis

after I had recruited the two board members assigned to me...
but Lent reminds us that we're all on the Hospice committee at times...
and we're sort of obligated to stay around until the end.

— Art Morgan, February 18, 2014