

GOOD MORNING, FRIENDS.

MY NAME IS POLLY SANFORD FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO DO NOT KNOW ME. I HAVE BEEN A MEMBER HERE FOR 27 YEARS. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO DO KNOW ME AND MAY NOT KNOW, I AM MOVING TO SAN FRANCISCO NEXT WEEK TO BE NEAR MY SONS, ANDREW AND MARK. I MISS THEM VERY MUCH AND ITS TIME FOR MOM TO MOVE NEAR THEM.

A FEW WEEKS AGO, LAURA ASKED ME IF I WOULD SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT "WHAT ST PETER'S MEANS TO ME". UGH – HOW SCARY. AND THEN BOB H WAS SPEAKING AND LAURA TOLD ME I WAS "OFF THE HOOK!" UNTIL LAST WEEK AND LAURA ASKED ME AGAIN TO RE-CONSIDER. AND SHE PASTORED TO ME AND PLANTED SEEDS ABOUT WHAT I MIGHT SAY. NOT ONLY IS LAURA A GIFTED SERMON WRITER AND PREACHER, SHE IS INCREDIBLY INSIGHTFUL. SO HERE I AM, AND LAURA'S SERMON LAST WEEK GAVE ME SOME TALKING POINTS.

BOB SPOKE LAST WEEK AND HE TOLD THE SAME OPENING STORY I WAS GOING TO START WITH! SO IT GOES – MY FAMILY CAME TO VISIT ST PETER'S IN 1995. WE VISITED A FEW TIMES AND THEN WE RECEIVED THE "DREADED CALL" FROM RUTH KIRK. "I'D LIKE TO COME AND VISIT WITH YOU." RUTH MET WITH ME DURING THE DAY AND ASKED WHAT WERE LOOKING FOR IN A CHURCH AND TALKED ABOUT ALL ST PETER'S COULD DO FOR MY FAMILY. AND SHE ASKED IF WE WOULD BE BACK. I SAID YES- AND THEN I TOLD RUTH A LIE. I SAID "YES, WE WILL BE BACK BUT... I AM NOT GETTING INVOLVED."

AND THE REST IS HISTORY. I JOINED THE CHOIR AFTER A YEAR OR SO. AND THEN ABOUT 22 YEARS AGO, WITH THE SUPPORT OF RUTH KIRK AND LATER EMILY RICHARDS, I DECIDED TO DIG DEEP IN THE SOIL HERE AT ST PETER'S AND PLANT SOME SEEDS TO SEE IF S WOMEN'S GROUP MIGHT GROW AND BLOSSOM.

THIS WAS MY GARDEN, THAT I GREW WITH MY GIFTS FROM GOD. AND AN AMAZING THING HAPPENED. INCREDIBLE WOMEN SHOWED UP - AND STILL DO! MY GARDEN GREW IMMENSELY. BLOOMS, FRAGRANCE, TALL, AND MANY PLANTS FED BY THE WOMEN OF ST PETER'S WITH THEIR GIFTS FROM GOD, GIFTS OF SUN, WATER, AIR, RICH SOIL AND PRUNING. AND IT BECAME OUR GARDEN FILLED WITH LOVE. THIS MINISTRY IS AMAZING, DUE TO THE WOMEN, WHO ARE ALL GARDENERS WITH THEIR UNIQUE GIFTS BROUGHT TO THE WOMEN'S GROUP.

WHILE I HAVE BEEN HERE AT ST PETER'S, I HAVE BEEN FRUITFUL AND FAITHFUL, I THINK, AS GOD WANTS US TO BE, AND IT IS HARD WORK AS WRITTEN BY RICHARD FLOYD – WHO LAURA QUOTED LAST WEEK IN HER SERMON ABOUT GARDENS AND GARDENING. PLANTING THIS GARDEN WAS HARD WORK, BUT SO REWARDING.

ST PETER'S IS A FRUITFUL AND FAITHFUL CHURCH. MANY HAVE PLANTED SEEDS AND ROOTS HERE. GOD WILL CONTINUE TO FEED US AND OUR GARDENS HERE, WITH SUN, WATER, RICH SOIL, AS HE DID FOR ME HERE.

AND NOW, THERE IS BLOSSOMING ALL AROUND US! WE ARE NOW COMING THROUGH A PANDEMIC, THE LOSS OF WORSHIPPING IN PERSON, OUR RECTOR'S LEAVE TAKING, OUR SEARCH FOR A "PRIEST IN CHARGE" AND SEEKING A NEW RECTOR. BUT IT'S SPRING! AND WE ARE ALIVE AND BLOOMING!

AND I JUST HAVE TO SAY, HOW INSPIRING THE FORMER ST PHILIPPIANS ARE AS GARDENERS. LIKE LAURA MENTIONED IN HER SERMON. HOW WONDERFUL THAT YOU TRUSTED US, REPLANTED A GARDEN AND ARE NOW BLOSSOMING WITH US!

WILL THE WOMEN'S GROUP CONTINUE? YOU BET, AS THE WOMEN DEEPLY LOVE AND CARE FOR EACH OTHER. IT MAY LOOK A BIT DIFFERENT AND THAT'S OK! THEY ARE THE GARDENERS. AND GOD WILL CONTINUE TO FEED ME AND TEND TO MY GARDEN, AND MY ROOTS, WHICH ARE DEEPLY, DEEPLY PLANTED HERE. I KNOW YOU WILL CARE FOR THEM.

YOU HAVE LOVED ME AND TRUSTED ME AND I THANK YOU. YOU ARE MY FAMILY. I WILL NOT BE FAR AWAY AND I WILL BE BACK TO VISIT AND I WILL BE ONLINE FOR SUNDAY SERVICES IN THE CHAT BOX EVEN THOUGH I WILL HAVE TO GET UP EARLY OUT THERE! I WILL MISS YOU ALL VERY MUCH.

THANK YOU.