

### **The courage to face life**

**The courage to face life – what this is becomes shockingly clear when it suddenly vanishes. How can we strengthen our courage to face life?**

**"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?"**

**John 11,8**

On December 29<sup>th</sup>, military companies, marching bands, fireworks, friends from the club that met to build miniature Christmas mangers and hundreds of acquaintances came to the graveyard in Sistrans, my home village in Tyrol. They came to part from Werner who was in the middle of his life, active in everything, a congenial family father. They came to express their disbelief. He had committed suicide at Christmas. It was overwhelming how the siblings tried to comfort each other; impressive how his wife could hold up during the services. On the day of this funeral, Tobias died, a boy I knew from youth work with the Jesuits as a student. And on New Year's Day while hiking to a mountain hut, two friends who were still distressed told me about two sixteen year olds from Tyrol who had also died in December. It was also startling for me because I had met so many 16 year olds in my youth work who had delighted me precisely because of their life energy, their desire for experiences in this phase of life.

There is certainly a unique inner biography behind each of these fates and looking back no one can pass judgement on who or what could have helped. Who can look into the depths of the soul and understand such extreme psychological dynamics that must move someone to take this step? And, nonetheless, the question presses me: who and what can strengthened the courage to live and the joy of the young people who live near us, those who, perhaps, find themselves at a point where desperation is close? That's why new people who possess unusually strong courage to live amaze me once again. Jesus was such a person. What can we learn from his inner biography? How did his especially steely courage to live develop in his youth? At the last Chanukah festival the atmosphere escalated, he was almost stoned to death. Nonetheless, he had no fear to return to this ideological overheated city. Even his disciples ask amazed where he finds the courage.

What motivates Jesus is a friendship with Martha, Maria and Lazarus which is emotionally so strong that the gospel writer emphasises that Jesus loved these people. Had the parents of both families been friends earlier? Or had Jesus met the siblings as a young person during the festivals in Jerusalem? At any rate, they belong to the people with whom he had found support, with whom he could develop his unique personality, with whom perhaps he could experience the adventure of adolescence, with whom he could talk about the questions of growing up: what is most important in life, what can one hold on to in the deepest parts of ones self?

Which friendships allowed my courage to face life to grow? What can I hold on to when existential questions arise? To whom can I give courage with an emotionally strong friendship?