BREATHE

A spiritual care resource created by Kaseman's Spiritual Care Department

THE PARABLE OF THE RAFT (a Buddhist wisdom story)

There was once a monk. This monk, a teacher, said to his students: "My teaching is like a raft used by someone to cross a fast-flowing river."

"A person was once trapped on one side of a river. On this side of the river, there is great danger and uncertainty; on the far side is safety. But there is no bridge spanning the river, nor is there a ferry to cross over. So what should this person do?"

"To cross to the safe side, this person gathered together bamboo poles and created a raft. By using a pole to push the raft while on the river, this smart person manages to cross the river from the dangerous side to the side of safety."

The wise teacher then asked the listeners of the wisdom story this question: "What would you think if the person, having crossed over the river thought to himself, 'That raft has served me well I will carry it on my back over the land now?'"
The student monks replied that it would NOT be a very sensible idea to cling to the raft in such a way.

The wise sage went on, "What if the person laid the raft down gratefully thinking that this raft has served well but is no longer of use and can thus be laid down upon the shore?"

"The young students replied that this would be the proper attitude, that's the right way."

The wise teacher concluded by saying, "So it is with my teaching which is like a raft and is for crossing over with—it is not for holding on to."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Which part of the story did you find the most important? Which part of the story resonated with you?
- What could the raft really be? What could "carrying the raft" really be?
- What experiences have you had that is close to this story?
- Where do you find yourself in this story? Which part of the story is about you?

WHICH PART(s) OF THE STORY IS ABOUT YOU?

RIVER / OBSTACLE

What wide rivers have you crossed? What obstacles do you have to cross?

YOUR RAFT

What tools (raft) have you used to cross your obstacle?

CLINGING ON

In what ways have you held on to your raft causing more burden in your journey?

In what ways have you let go of your raft when you were done using it?

YOUR GUIDE

Who is your guide to help you let go?