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## From the Clergy Associate

Recently, a parishioner came across an excerpt from Margery Williams' well-known children's book, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, which his wife had carefully written out at some point in the weeks, months, or years before her death from breast cancer last December. He shared the excerpt with me, and with his permission I share a slightly extended version of it with you...

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but *really* loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

When I read this, it stirred up a whole range of thoughts and emotions, but I thought how especially appropriate it was for the season of Lent. Lent, a time during which we intentionally look at what our sharp edges might be, those actions, grudges, or thoughts that interfere in our relationships with each other and with God. What lies behind our places of rigidity, those places in which we cannot waver from our own point of view, or even consider the possibility of forgiveness?

When we are willing to allow ourselves to be "fully known" as St. Paul writes (1 Corinthians 13:12), and allow ourselves to admit and confess our sins against God and our neighbor, "intending to lead a new life" (BCP p. 330), then we can begin to accept the fact that we are not in total control, and certainly not perfect. But by God's grace and mercy, we are loved as children of God—and from

this love we are called to love each other. And when we allow ourselves to love deeply and be loved deeply, we just might get “loose in the joints,” or have our “eyes begin to drop out,” or a bit “shabby”... And for some of us, what a blessing it is to realize that we have simply had “most of our hair loved off”!

Jesus, fully human and fully divine, loved deeply as he walked toward Jerusalem and ultimately to the cross. He knew our joys and our sorrows of loving deeply. But out of death and the cross, the very real love of God always brings new life.

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