

Fifth Sunday Of Lent, Raising Lazarus

March 29, 2020

Dear Friends,

These days, it is certainly easy to feel like we are stuck in a tomb, similar to Lazarus, until Jesus called him out from the tomb and brought him back to life. Similarly, our fears, anxiety and focus on our flaws can en-tomb us, thwarting our ability to become who we truly are. The good news is that you are alive and hopefully blessed with good health, thank God. This begs the question: how alive are you really? During this unprecedented time when we are forced to follow a new pattern and way of being - social distancing and home-quarantine - it is a wonderful opportunity to ask yourself: what are the things about you that are preventing you from becoming the best person you can be? What is interfering with your relationship with God? What is interfering with your relationship with your family and your friends? Taking the time to reflect on these questions enables you and me to face our fear and quell our anxiety, which creates space for us to be able to cultivate our gifts and pursue our aspirations and to foster those important relationships that help us to become fully human.

You are missed!

Blessings,

Tracy

Fr. John's Reflection

Scripture tells us that Jesus enjoys the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. He goes there often. (John 9:1-45)

They are close friends, affectionate friends.

Mary may very well be the Mary, that washes the feet of Jesus with her tears, dries them with her hair and rubs them with perfumed oil.

Where does Jesus turn in the face of his impending death?

He heads straight to her house.

And, when Martha and Mary are in trouble, where do they go?

They go to Him: "Lord, the one you love is sick."

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus very much.

The text reports "See how much he loved them!"

These friends are so close that both Martha and Mary chew Jesus out and get away with it:

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would never had died."

And finally, Jesus seeing Mary, his friend weep, Jesus begins to weep.

Jesus' friendship with Martha, Mary and Lazarus tells us that Jesus is that human. He doesn't love everyone the same.

These are His friends.

The people He lets His hair down.

These are the people He calls upon when He is in trouble.

And, they expect Him to go to them, when they are in trouble.

Relationships matter to Him, as they matter to us.

During this crisis, we need to be creative in keeping in touch with friends, respecting social distance.

Just as Jesus is not always understood by his friends, we may not always be understood either.

How are we doing in reaching out for support?

How are we doing in offering support?

A number of you relish being with family.

Others share you miss friends from the College.

Share with Jesus, how you are doing.

Secondly and finally, I would like to address the hardest part of priesthood: convincing people of God's unconditional love.

As important as accountability is, Jesus does not come to gather us to condemn, judge & damn.

Jesus comes to talk us out of the mean God that can exist in our minds.

Jesus offers life. Death is not final. Not only after our death, but He offers life right now.

Streaming the movie, "The Shack", may help us appreciate God's love.

In the film, Mackenzie falls into a great sadness after the abduction of his young daughter.

He cannot begin to understand how God would let this happen.

God reaches out to "Mack" through God (who is called "Papa") and his son Jesus.

The thought-provoking conversations with Papa revolve around justice and suffering.

Mack's interactions with Jesus begin a growing friendship between the two.

In the midst of heartache, Mack and Jesus come to enjoy each other.

For Mack, the relationship is transformational.

No film, book or sermon can possibly capture the total truth about God.

Yet, they can offer us hints of the truth about God.

"The Shack" does a wonderful job in highlighting God's love for every person:

His presence in our darkest moments and His offer of meaningful friendship.

It is a tough time. Remember Williamstown. Media reports fourteen residents at Williamstown Commons Nursing Home diagnosed with the virus. Remember them, their families and the heroic staff. We keep you in our prayer including in the Masses streamed on the parish website or broadcast on Willinet Community TV here, <https://www.willinet.org/>. We do what we can and leave the rest to God.

Pope Francis offered an “Urbi et Orbi” (For the City of Rome and the World) Friday afternoon. Check out the text:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-03/pope-francis-urbi-et-orbi-blessing-coronavirus.html>

The complete video is quite beautiful as well:

<https://youtu.be/JcUqLrbi9Cg>

It is a blessed time to appreciate the message of Jesus’ friendship with Martha, Lazarus and Mary:

God loves you very much.

Fr. John