

Fifth Sunday of Lent A 2020
Mass Suspended due to Coronavirus
On-Line Homily
Ezek. 37.12-14///Romans 8.8-11///John 11.1-45

→A father went to tuck his little girl into bed. He listened as she said her nightly prayers, kissed her gently on the forehead and turned toward the door to turn out the light and leave for the night.

→“*Please stay a little longer, Daddy!*” she pleaded,

→He returned to her bedside assuming this was yet another of her myriad of excuses to extend her day a little longer.

→But as he got closer he saw a trickle of a tear on her cheek and the quiver of genuine fear on her lips.

→It melted his heart as he sat on the edge of the bed to console her. He reminded her of her prayers said just minutes ago, how she asked God to be near and watch over her as she slept.

→“*Don't be afraid...God is here with you all night, even though you cannot see him,*” the father told her.

→But she replied, “*But I want you to stay, Daddy...I need a god with skin on him.*”

→A god with skin on him...imagine that!

→What the little girl needed, what all of us need, is for God to be powerful and almighty, and to also be near us, touch our lives, and be intimate with our hurts, fears and hopes...

→especially when the “news” we hear might not sound all that good...

--like the day that the doctor calls you back for a second visit;

--or the day when you realize that the words “*I love you*” are no longer enough;

--or the day that the factory closes its doors and padlocks the gate;

--or when we continue to hear of people getting sick and all of us being effected by the current health circumstances we are now living with.

→Today we hear the gospel story of Lazarus along with Martha and Mary.

→Jesus arrives as the sisters cope with the death of their brother and we are told of how they are dealing with this loss, and more importantly, of how they come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of life over death.

→But before they arrive at this belief...we find them bound and helpless by the burden they face.

→Sometimes when faced with similar situations...we too find ourselves like Martha and Mary, standing alone at a tomb of our own making, bound up and helpless...wanting to find a God with skin on him!

→Likewise there are times when “good news” is also very easy to ignore--

→When it is simpler to say... “gee I’m sorry” or “that’s really not my concern” rather than transform our lives...when it is safer and easier to look the other way rather than to get involved.

→...when the passion that once propelled us to fight against injustice, speak the truth, stand beside the forgotten and poor has long since cooled and left us...shivering in the tomb...bound up and helpless.

→There are times when the tombs we make for ourselves can be downright comfortable!

→Because there, nobody bothers us, asks us questions or expects any answers.

→Nobody hands us an agenda or schedules our life....nobody makes demands on our time or disturbs our peace.

→And furthermore, if the bindings that we have put around us restrict our movement and freedom, they can also, at the same time, keep us safe and secure.

→So in these particular days of challenge and uncertainty, it is easy to awaken and find ourselves secure and bound in the tomb, similar to the scene that we hear about in the gospel story today.

→However as we well know and learn from today's story, Jesus spent his entire life inviting people to come out of the tomb; to tear off the restrictive cloths; and leave the darkness behind.

→To step out and into the light!!!

→ *“Go and sin no more...woman, you are set free from your ailment...follow me and I will make you fishers of men and women...take up your pallet and walk...do not be afraid...then finally today...Lazarus come out!”*

→In all instances, the only acceptable response to such an amazing offer is to get up, tear off our bindings...come out of the tomb and follow the one who has called and set us free!

→In these times of uncertainty and confusion, as we deal and cope with, hopefully a temporary new way of life, and as we face a situation that can be fearful and frightening, we might ask...how is Jesus calling each one of us into the light!!!

→How can we move towards and urge others to the light!!!

→In today's world and society, we face so many difficult decisions and challenges preventing us from fully living the gospel message.

→We struggle to promote the value of life...

→We ignore injustice; remain ignorant to social unrest; and silent to even talking about Jesus or a life of faith, a set of values, a code of morals and beliefs...

→The past few weeks have found us shaken to our core as we strive to cope, adjust, and adapt.

→These are the ways we can find ourselves staying in our tomb...

→However, as people of faith we continue to be called forth to come out and to rise up just like Lazarus in today's gospel.

→Stepping out to walk a new path is never easy.

→However, if we are to remain true to the gospel, our baptism, our world, and our faith, then we must embrace the idea of exiting our tomb!

→We must embrace and believe that we are no longer bound by death; no longer tied to past mistakes; and no longer standing in the dark unable to find our way!

→Today Jesus is calling you and me to come out of our comfortable tomb, move away from our fear and doubt, and come into the light!

→To join Lazarus, Martha, and Mary and become part of the long procession of believers whose hearts are on fire!

→No doubt the coming weeks of Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter will be different this year, unlike any we will ever experience...but in the midst of this uncertainty we can enter into the "light" of Christ knowing that God will take care, watch over and protect us.

→We have a God who has skin on him! And that God dwells in each one of us!

→As we continue to muddle through these days, let us do so with the confidence, hope, and certainty that we will come out of our tomb and into the "light" renewed, stronger, and full of faith and thanksgiving!

Saint William, pray for us!

I miss seeing all of you each week but remain confident and hopeful that this will soon pass and all will return to normal. I continue to offer my daily prayers and thoughts for your well-being and for those you care about. Continue to keep the faith, remain strong, be safe and stay healthy!!!

Finally to close, I would like offer the following humorous story and piece of wisdom that I came across this past week to hopefully brighten your day!

It seems that a woman who went to Church each week with her six-year old grandson learned that their pastor had died. A retired priest was temporarily sent to serve as a replacement. One day he announced that the bishop would soon be sending a new young priest directly from the seminary. When her grandson heard this announcement, he turned to his grandmother and said, "when the new priest arrives he would no longer be going to Mass." "Why are you saying that?" the grandmother wanted to know. The young boy answered, "when they start getting priests directly from the cemetery, it's time to stay home!"

"Success is getting what you want; happiness is wanting what you get!"