

29<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, Year A)

Ezekiel 37:12-14; Psalm 129(130); Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45.

***'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?'***

Over the past three weeks, we have heard Jesus declare that he is the life-giving water and the light of the world; today he will show himself to us as the resurrection and the life. To be able to experience Jesus as our resurrection, we are required to believe and place our full trust in him.

The gospel according to John is full of experiences of people's faith, or lack of faith, in Jesus. We started this Lenten journey with Peter, James and John on the high mountain in the presence the transfigured Jesus. They saw Jesus as they had never seen him before, and the voice of the Father ordering them to listen to him! We encountered the Samaritan woman and the people of Sychar who declared Jesus to be the saviour of the world. We met the man born blind who worshipped Jesus. Today we are invited to measure our faith against the response of Martha and Mary.

The gospel tells us that Martha, Mary and their brother Lazarus were close friends of Jesus; he loved the two sisters and their brother. In the gospel according to Luke we read of another visit to this household (10:38-42). From the conversation Martha and Mary have with Jesus, we understand that they were among his disciples. They knew Jesus and they trusted him, but how deep was their faith in him?

This is the great question we are always faced with: what does it really mean to believe in Jesus? Martha believes in the resurrection from the dead 'on the last day,' she also declares that Jesus is 'the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world,' but does she really trust that he can call her brother back to life? When Jesus asks to have the stone removed, she protests: 'by now he will smell!' Similarly, Mary cries: 'if only you had been here, my brother would not have died!'

As we watch these different journeys we understand we are not alone in our own journey of faith. Perhaps a good prayer for us could be the one of the father in the gospel according to Mark (9:24): 'I believe; help my unbelief!' Faith is a relationship, a journey of growth as we learn to trust and abandon ourselves totally in God's hands. Today Jesus invites us to trust in him so we can experience the glory of God.

The glory of God is shown, in a special way, in calling Lazarus back to earthly life. Just as Jesus can call forth Lazarus from the tomb, he can also call us forth to the fullness of life in God 'on the last day.' Lazarus came forth from his tomb wrapped in burial cloths, indicating that one day, he will die again. When we are called to the resurrection we will not need our burial cloths, because we will be reborn into eternal life.

This Lent we are all experiencing a different type of death. Like Lazarus we feel we have lost our life and our liberty. We are constantly being told to stay away from each other and to isolate ourselves. Many of us have jobs and security. In a few weeks the world we have known has been radically changed. Even our faith is challenged. We can no longer openly practice our faith, we can no longer participate in the Eucharistic meal. We have been ordered to close our church buildings in order to help stop the spread of this deadly virus. The question that arises is: where is God in all this? Lord, if you had been here, none of this would have happened! But the Lord IS here! The Lord journeys and travels with us and if we truly believe we too will see the glory of God.

It is not up to me to declare how the glory of God will shine at this time, what it will look like for us. Like you I too am wrapped in the mystery of all that is happening. It is interesting that all this is happening as we are preparing to celebrate the greatest of all events: the passion death and resurrection of Jesus. This does feel and taste like death, what will the resurrection feel like.

The journey of faith often feels like walking around in the dark, with our hands stretched out in front of us to try to feel the way without tripping and stumbling. Like Martha and Mary, even though

we sincerely profess our faith, we too will trip, stumble and feel weak in our faith. Every time this happens to us we need to stand up and continue moving forward in the belief that even in this dark night, God is still present, journeying and suffering with us.

The Jesus story does not end on the cross, but at the resurrection. Our journey of faith too does not end in darkness, but in the bright light of the resurrection. Let us keep our hope alive, let us continue believing and following our Lord and Master.

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