

Lent V
3/26/2017

COME OUT

Each Sunday this Lent we've moved from the desert of temptation to the mountain of the Transfiguration, to the well of the Samaritan woman, to the pool of Siloam where the man born blind received his sight. Today takes us to the tomb of Lazarus.

The story of the Samaritan Woman is about baptism because baptism involves living waters. The story of the man born blind is about baptism because he is enlightened by Christ and the even the raising of Lazarus tells us about baptism because as St. Paul tells us, when we're baptized, we are baptized into the death of Jesus so that we might share in his resurrection.

Lent is about baptism. For those seeking baptism, Lent represents a special time of final preparation. For those who have been baptized, Lent is special time of preparation to renew our own baptismal commitment. The words of St. Thomas in today's gospel, *Let us also go to die with him*, describes the situation of the apostles but it also describes what we do. In baptism, we share in Jesus' dying and rising, we are grafted onto what is called the Paschal Mystery—the movement from life through death into new life that Jesus pioneered. But it's not something we do only by our baptism, the Christian life is an ongoing sharing in the dying and rising of Jesus. Those words of St. Thomas about going to die with Jesus are very true but it's also true that we're to rise with him.

But this all requires faith. The Samaritan woman came to faith. The man born blind came to faith but the gospel tells us nothing about the faith of Lazarus. However, it does speak to us about the faith of Martha. The fact that Martha and Mary sent word to Jesus was an act of faith. When Jesus arrives, Martha will say, *I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day*. She already believes in the resurrection and Jesus responds saying, *I am the resurrection and the Life*. He says that faith in him leads to eternal life and he asks Martha if she believes this.

Her response and the phrasing of her response is telling. She doesn't simply say that she believes. She says, *Yes Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world*. In other words, somehow, faith has been a process for her. In a way we do not know, she has come

to believe and even in the midst of intense grief, she doesn't deny her faith but rather she affirms it. Martha lives a life of intentional faith.

We all grieve differently and that's understandable. Grief is something complicated and can express itself not only in sadness but in anger, guilt, relief and in any number of ways in any number of combinations. But grief is also a time of invitation, an invitation like Martha to renew our faith in the resurrection. We don't know about Lazarus' faith but we do know about Martha's faith. It was something that grew and progressed. The same is true for us.

So far today's gospel has been talking the talk. Now it walks the walk. Jesus goes to the tomb. Jesus weeps, gives thanks to the Father and he calls Lazarus out to new life. And it happens. Jesus reveals himself as truly human, one who weeps and truly God, one who raises the dead and rises from the dead. But rising to new life isn't just something that happened to Lazarus and the resurrection isn't just something that will occur at the end of time. Just as Jesus stood before the tomb of Lazarus and said, *Come out*, so too when we are dead in sin, when we have enclosed ourselves in a tomb of sin, Jesus says to us, *Come out*. Pope Francis has noted, Christ is not resigned to the tombs that we have built for ourselves with our choice for evil and death, with our errors, with our sins. He invites us, almost orders us, to come out of the tomb in which our sins have buried us. "Come out!". It is an invitation to true freedom.

When we are bound by pride, greed, our own poor choices and even addictions to alcohol, drugs, the dark side of the internet, gambling or anything else, Jesus says, to us, *Come out. Come into the freedom of the children of God*. When we celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation, Jesus stands before us at the grave of our own sins and says, *Come out*. To share in this sacrament is to share in Jesus' dying and rising. To be forgiven is an experience of new life, an experience of resurrection.

There's another group of people in today's gospel. They're nameless but important. Jesus says, *Untie him and let him go*. Jesus calls Lazarus to life but then calls others to help free him. Jesus seeks the help of others. So too, when Jesus calls others to new life, he calls others to help them. We journey to God together. We help one another as fellow travelers on the journey of following Jesus. It is Jesus who does the raising, the healing or whatever else but he calls us to assist him in this work.

In faith we've journeyed this Lent from the desert to a mountain to a well, to a pool, to a grave. Next week, Jerusalem.