

SUNDAY HOMILY  
FIFTH WEEK OF LENT  
29 March 2020

On the Gospel: John 11: 1-45 ([usccb daily readings](#))

***Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless.  
From the deceitful and cunning rescue me,  
for you, O God are my strength.***

***Entrance Antiphon  
Psalm 43[42]:1-2***

In praying over these readings a memory came to me that I have not thought of in some time, (and I should warn you this is a rejection story). This was years ago when I first came to the parish. I was receiving emails from a family who was not all that happy with me, with the parish, with our school, and so forth. They decided that they would hop over to Saint The-Grass-Is-Greener-On-The-Other-Side-Of-The-Fence. So they went. I thought for sure that everything was then in a sense dead and buried and placed quietly in a tomb of sorts.

Much to my surprise, a few months later I received a call from the family. They wanted to come back. They wanted to come back to the parish and they wanted the children reenrolled in the school. I was shocked and taken aback. I didn't even ask "why?" I remember the conversation was really pleasant, and I welcomed them back with open arms. However, the spiritual parent in me came out and I had to ask the question, "What is going to be different?" The parent was now taken aback. I remember there was some stammering and some hemming and hawing and eventually there was a, "What do you mean, Father?"

So I asked again, "What's going to be different when you come back? What is going to change ... in yourself or what do you want changed in me?" They didn't know how to respond.

I offered three strong recommendations:

1. Your family should be coming to Sunday Mass every weekend.
2. You should be responsible and honor your tuition payments especially since I have to be responsible in paying my teachers
3. I want to sit down with you and your spouse so that we can talk about your spiritual lives and the spiritual life of your family.

The individual agreed. For the next few years they pretty much fulfilled these recommendation. I would see them at Sunday Mass, we would even chat a bit afterward. It was a great connection to have. When the children graduated from the school, however, that was sadly, the last time I saw them. That was years ago. I really hadn't thought about this in some time, but this encounter came to me because of God' Word proclaimed today.

There was certainly a sadness when this particular family seemed to close a door on me and on the parish. When it seemed that our connection and relationship was placed in a dark, cold tomb. So of course I was elated when the stone rolled away. When life came out of the tomb and a reconnection was made. But before coming out of that tomb the question had to be asked "What is going to be different?"

In other words from the Gospel today: Are you going to be resuscitated? Just given a heartbeat ... a mere second chance... that's actually what happened to Lazarus. Or are you going to be resurrected? This is something completely different.

This is about being made brand new ... given a new purpose, new resolve, new direction, new understanding. Given a faith that isn't fickle, that isn't just pulled out when it's convenient but having a faith that sustains and goes deep, that becomes a means to transport us through tribulation and trials and sorrow... that is edified by our joy and celebrations. Where with every turn and every experience it only grows and expands. A faith that calls us out of tombs of our own making ... the tombs of selfishness, the tombs of sin, the tombs that leave us cold, unsatisfied, and disconnected, and totally free in knowing and following God's will for our lives.

Eventually, my friends, we will get through this pandemic. It may seem like for now, we are sequestered in some tomb as we are told "stay home." Eventually we will hear a voice sound that the order to stay inside will be relaxed and suspended all together. Sure listen for that voice. However, even more so, listen for the voice of Jesus calling out to you: "Come Out."

But before you do: What will be different, what will have changed? What bands of sin that tie you down need to be released? What strings of selfishness that are attached to you or that you attach to others, what strings, need to be cut? What wrappings that prevent you from being a deep down disciple need to be torn off and cast aside?

So that you emerge from this time, not just resuscitated with a heartbeat, but so that you emerge from this time resurrected with a heart beating for the fullness of life in God.