

March 28/29: The Raising of Lazarus

THOUGHTS FROM GINA CATTALINI

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“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” How many of us have cried out to God in pain or anger at the death of a loved one? Or in confusion at a world suddenly turned upside down by a microscopic virus? Yet despite her grief Martha offers one of the greatest professions of faith in the Gospels, claiming Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

I did my share of crying out to God after the sudden death of Father Mat last fall. Over time I came to realize that I was not simply mourning the loss of my pastor, co-worker, and friend. I was also grieving the loss of a dream of what St. Bonaventure would become under his leadership, a vision cut tragically short. During that time I truly was held up by faith – not just my own, but the faith of an entire community. I watched this community come together in love and pain, hold each other up, and resolve to move forward with the grace of God.

Martha and Mary also had their community to cry with them and hold them up. Jesus himself wept with them, entering into their pain and suffering. Then Jesus did the unexpected, bidding the group to roll away the stone and calling Lazarus out of the tomb. He demonstrated the meaning of his words, a sign that his disciples would only understand after his own death and resurrection: “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.”

As Christians we believe that death is not the end. Eternal life is not just a future promise but a present reality for those united in Christ. Jesus did not wipe out the pain of death and suffering – that time is still to come – but his victory transformed them and our understanding of their finality. During the months after Father Mat’s death, as our community grieved, we lived out that faith in so many ways, continuing to worship and love and minister as one body of Christ.

Now we are grieving again, not just for our parish, but for our nation and our world. The uncertainty of what would happen to our community after Father Mat’s death has been changed to the question of what will happen to our world after the coronavirus. We don’t even have the comfort of gathering together physically to receive the nourishment of the sacraments. I know that Jesus weeps with our pain and confusion.

And yet, although the scale is different, I believe the answer is the same. We gather together in faith and love, to worship and to reach out as one community. Our gathering may be different, by computer or telephone, but we are holding on stubbornly to one another. We reach out, neighbor to neighbor, and as a community through ministries such as the Food Pantry and St. Vincent de Paul. We refuse to let social distance keep us emotionally distant. We discover new ways to work, worship, and show our love. We

remember what it means to be the body of Christ, united wherever we are. And we hold fast to the promise of Jesus: “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?”