

Homily for Sunday Mass
March 29, 2020
Year A – John 11:1:45
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

My dear friends, we once again find ourselves separated by space but not by faith as we come together on this 5th Sunday in Lent via the internet. I know we miss being together so much but it is also in that knowledge that we can also draw on that love we have for each other, and the love we now share in this Mass, to fill our hearts with joy, happiness, and resolve. Joy that we share in the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Happiness that we are still able to connect in new and meaningful ways while not physically together. Resolve that we will be back together again, and I do pray, soon.

It is hard not to want to talk exclusively about the pandemic and the new / drastic measures we are experiencing as a society, it is quite understandable. But in anytime of difficulty, or even joy for that matter, I suggest we always look to Scripture and learn how that informs us of those situations and what Wisdom has been given us to more fully live through it in an authentic and Christian way.

Our Gospel readings of last week, and this week, offer some clues for us to draw strength and guidance. Last week Msgr. Harry spoke of a blind man healed by Jesus and today we just heard the story familiar story of Jesus' friend, Lazarus. I was always curious as a young man, first experiencing this Gospel, why Jesus waited two extra days before traveling to see Lazarus and I believe my younger self, and all of us, can find that answer earlier in St. John's Gospel in Chapter 9 where Jesus answered the question who sinned to cause the blind man his condition, "...he was born blind [Jesus said] so that God's works might be revealed in him" (JN 9:3). In other words, he was not being punished for the sins of his parents or of himself.

My dear friends, life presents us with so much – sometimes joy, other times hardship, and occasional despair. I know it sounds rather simplistic, but I do believe that we have to believe that none of life's situations present themselves to us to hurt, harm, or even punish us. Life moves forward without pause regardless of our individual lot, but it does give us a chance to look to God for guidance in the moment and in reflection on past situations. So many times, I have looked back at dark and troubling times in my life only to see how much better off I am after them. I have seen myself improve drastically at time from hardship, and other times learning new insights and wisdom from such situation. That does not make the 'hurt' any less painful, but it does remind me that the Beatles were right in their use of Bible scripture, in that there is a time and season for everything under heaven.

So, even this terrible thing that is upon us now I am convinced will have silver linings too. Already we are seeing people, total strangers, helping each other. Making food, shopping for the elderly, singing on balconies, donating emergency supplies to first responders...the list goes on and on. It is also not lost on me that this virus comes at a time when we are so polarized in our political and social beliefs that maybe, just maybe, this shared time of virus, isolation, illness, and dread will allow us to see the 'other' as one of us. Just another beautiful creation of God struggling under the same difficulties as we are. Discovering our neighbors and learning to have empathy for them...to love them. Just as Jesus had empathy and love for Mary, Martha, and the grieving friends of Lazarus.

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Thinking again of our Gospel reading we read “...and Jesus wept...” (JN 11:35) and showed great emotion. This is one of those special moments in all the Gospels where we get to see a very intimate and personal side of Jesus. This human emotion of sadness that we often experience in life, is now shared with us by our Lord, our God. Jesus knew that Lazarus would live but that did not stop him from feeling a deep emotion in the moment. We should connect with this as we know, in our faith of God’s guiding hand, that we will get through this time of pandemic fear, but it is also okay to be afraid and scared but we must not lose sight of the knowledge that God is with us in it. Connect those emotions with that of Jesus and draw strength in his shared humanity with you and strength from his wisdom that it will be alright. We will get through this, together with our Savior at our side.

So, walk with Jesus, walk in the light and you will not stumble in the dark. Jesus reminds us of this even now in that we must, now more than ever, hold to our faith and to Jesus’ light to guide us in these dark times. It is only through our faith in the Lord that we will find the light and the true path through the darkness.

Let us not be bound in our own sins and fears to the point of an inner death of ourselves and our souls. Hear the call of Jesus, calling us out of our tombs of fear and doubt to again set us free to live in joy and love with each other and with our Savior. AMEN

---Citations---

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