

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER “A” 2020

In 1984, Columbia Pictures released a romantic sci-fi film titled *Starman*. It is the story about an alien coming to earth in response to a recorded message of peace and an invitation to visit earth that the [Voyager 2](#) space probe carried on a [gold phonographic disk](#). Instead of greeting the alien craft, the U.S. government shoots it down as it enters earth's atmosphere.

Once struck, the alien's vessel veers of course and crashes in a rural area of [Wisconsin](#). The lone alien occupant, looking like a floating ball of glowing energy, finds the home of recently widowed young woman named Jenny Hayden. While there, the alien uses a lock of hair from Jenny's deceased husband to clone a human body for himself. As a terrified Jenny watches, an identical image of her late husband appears before her.

The Starman has seven small silver spheres which provide energy to perform miraculous feats. He uses the first to send a message to his people stating that Earth is hostile and his [spacecraft](#) has been destroyed. He arranges to rendezvous with them in three days' time in Arizona's [Barringer Crater](#). He uses a second sphere to create a holographic map of the United States and then coerces Jenny to take him to the rendezvous point in [Arizona](#).

Initially, Jenny is both resistant and frightened of the Starman, and attempts to escape. With his very basic understanding of the English language which came from the *Voyager 2* disk, the Starman learns to communicate with Jenny and assures her that he means her no harm. He explains that if he does not reach the rendezvous point in three days, he will die. Sympathetic but still

wary, Jenny assists the Starman in his journey. All the while, the military and scientists are chasing after them to capture the alien.

Jenny and the Starman go through many dangerous situations, always with

the Starman using one of the silver spheres to save them.

At the end of the movie, a sympathetic scientist assists Jenny and the Starman to avoid capture, just as the Army is closing in, and then helps them get to the crater so that the Starman can be rescued by the alien mother ship. Shortly before leaving, the scientist asks the Starman what he observed about humans in his brief stay. The Starman replied, “*When things are at their worst, humans are at their very best.*”

I couldn't agree more with that statement, especially in light of this current pandemic. When things are at their worst, most humans are at their very best. I have been so touched, amazed and inspired by the goodness, kindness, selflessness, and creativity of so many, in response to this crisis.

First, I think of and thank all the frontline people who daily put their lives on the line, caring for people during this crisis: our doctors, nurses, medical personnel, police officers, firefighters, and other first responders.

But I also think of and thank other people closer to home:

- The administration and faculty of St. Rose of Lima Grade School as they continue our excellent school program over ZOOM.

- Pauline Simpson, our Director of Religious Education, who is carrying on our Religious Education Program through ZOOM.
- Adam Cross and his wonderful youth ministry team who carry on their youth programs by ZOOM.
- Rick Ostrich, Fr. Luis Estrada and a wonderful team of people who are live streaming our daily and Sunday Masses, and getting people to share their journeys of faith on our website.
- Our Christian Service Ministry that still distributes food to the needy families.
- The Members of the Knights of Columbus who are shopping and delivering food to senior members of their fraternity who are homebound.
- Tim Dawson, our evangelization coordinator, has been working on developing resources that our parish families can use during these times of self-isolation. You can the link to these resources on the website.
- The many parishioners who have called, e-mailed or texted us priests to inquire how we are doing and who have dropped food at the rectory. When things have been at their very worst, many of you have been at your very best, doing remarkable things in the spirit of our patroness, St. Rose of Lima. I am so proud of you.
- And, of course, our mothers whom we home today, who were and are always at their best when we were at our worst.

We Christians especially should be at our very best when things are at their worst because of our faith in Jesus Christ and

because of our faith in the words Jesus spoke in today's Gospel, which begin with, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and have faith in me.*" Martin Luther called this passage "*the best and most comforting sermon that the Lord Christ delivered on earth, a treasure and a jewel not to be purchased with the world's goods.*"

Not only are these words comforting, but also they are inspiring. When things are at their worst, we can be at our very best—giving and risking—because we trust Jesus' Person and His Promises.

First, we can trust that Jesus is a Person of compassion. Jesus knows what it is to have a troubled heart when things are at their worst. In John's Gospel, there are 3 instances before this scene when Jesus' own heart was troubled. The first was in John 11:33 when Jesus felt the sorrow of losing His good friend Lazarus. The second was just after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem when He told Philip and Andrew that His hour had come—referring to His fast-approaching death on the cross—and, in John 12:27, Jesus said, "*My soul is troubled now; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but it was for this that I came to this hour.*" And the third time was in John 13:21 when Jesus revealed to His disciples that one of His disciples would betray Him.

All these show that there is nothing wrong with having a troubled heart—to feel the anxiety and pain, when the worst of times enter our lives. They are part of life on this side of glory. What is important is how we deal with these moments that trouble our hearts, which brings us to the second reason why we

should be at our best when things are at their worst—and that is because of Jesus' PROMISES.

The first promise is this: *“In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.*

No matter how tough times are, we have an assurance of something permanent and glorious in the future—something that nobody and nothing can take away from us. Jesus has promised to provide us with a permanent home one day in heaven.

At the time that Jesus lived in Israel, it was common for closely-related families to live together under one roof as one extended family. As the sons of the family grew up and got married, additional rooms would be added and prepared for them and so the house got bigger and bigger. The son who was going to get married would assure his bride that, after he has got their room in his father's house all prepared and ready, he will come and take her to live with him on their wedding day.

With this promise, we see Jesus doing the same thing. He promises us that He is going back to prepare places for us in the many rooms of His Father's house. Isn't it exciting and encouraging to look forward to the time when Jesus will return and take us to heaven to live with Him forever? What makes heaven such a wonderful place is that there will be no more sorrow, nor tears; nor more pain, no more suffering and no more sin. Everything will be perfect and forever. But the most attractive feature of all is that we will be together with Jesus

forever. It should comfort us now to know that no matter how bad things may become in this world, one day we will be with Jesus in a wonderful home and with a perfect life that is waiting in heaven for us.

But Jesus' promises are not just for something in the future. Jesus also promises us that He will share with us an abundant life now and will show us how to get to the perfect life in the hereafter. We hear this promise when Jesus said, "*Where I am going you know the way. Thomas said to him, 'Master, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'*"

Jesus isn't just a way or one of the ways. He is THE WAY—the only way to God and the Kingdom of God. There are so many off ramps in this confusing world. It's so easy to get lost.

Recently I read the true story of a couple who got lost on a back road in Ireland. They spotted a farmer leading his cow to pasture and they stopped him. "*Excuse me. Could you direct us to Mohill? We're lost.*" And the Irish farmer smiled at them, and said "*Ah, you're not lost at all. For y'see, you've found me. And I know the way.*" When you have found Jesus, we're never lost! For Jesus is THE WAY! He is our Divine GPS.

Second, Jesus is THE TRUTH—not a truth or one of the truths—but TRUTH ITSELF. He is the standard of reality against which everything else in our world is measured. For example, do you know how valuable you are? All you have to do is look at John 3:16: "*For God so loved the world (and US) that He gave His only begotten Son...*" We are so valuable to

God that Jesus came to die on the cross, just for us. That truth tells us all we need to know about how much God cares for us, about God's love and mercy for us, and about how we can be forgiven of things that embarrass us or cause us to be ashamed. And that truth is more important than anything else this world can offer us.

Lastly, Jesus is THE LIFE. I have a priest friend who, after a lovely meal with a glass of wine, will say, "*This is the life! It can't get better than this!*" The truth is if you took every wonderful moment of life—no matter how beautiful and fulfilling—if you took every wonderful moment of life for every person for all time—and put them together—they would be like a grain of sand compared to all the material of the universe. That's how abundant and fulfilling God's life is. And it is promised to us who believe. It can't get better than that!

For most people, the line from the movie, *Starman* holds true: "*When things are at their worst, humans are at their very best.*" We have been witnessing this in the midst of this pandemic and especially with our mothers whom we honor today.

And we Christians especially should be at our very best when things are at their worst because of our faith in the Compassionate Person of Jesus, who knows about troubled times and hearts, and faith in Jesus' Promises that He will get us through the troubled times and will get us home to heaven because He is the way, the truth and the life.