

5th SUNDAY in LENT (A-7) (6:00pm Sat.) **What's in our tomb?**

We all have a history of losses; perhaps it's the loss of a loved one, or of a job, or of our house more recently. Looking at the Gospels as a history of Christ's life, which includes his losses, and if we look at how he dealt with himself and others when they experienced loss, then we can take solace in knowing that Jesus felt like we feel. He invites us to do as he. A loss invites grief and we're invited to grieve with Martha, Mary and Jesus today and learn how to move forward.

Even though it's hard, helping families grieve is one of the things that gives me hope, increases my faith, and makes me feel content. Why? Because there is no more intimate way to show others who we are, whose we are, and for whom we're here to serve than to help others grieve well. If I were to put on a mask to cope, families would see right through me and lose faith in me, and on account of the mask, may lose faith in God, too. What a responsibility we, priests, have!

For people of faith, even though a death hurts, we're happy because our loved one has finished one's mission on earth and is with God, interceding for all of us. If we had no faith, we'd feel like we were looking at the dry bones Ezekiel talked about in the 1st reading.

The pain of loss is unavoidable. Even with faith, Martha and Mary hurt. Jesus had to assure them that in faith, they needed to trust him one more time. Had it not hurt, then no investment was put into the relationship, and they would not have risked loving and being loved.

However, even in faith, Martha and Mary were angry with Jesus. He didn't come when told, and Lazarus died. Jesus was at least 2-days away, and Lazarus had been in the tomb 4 days by the time Jesus arrived, so Lazarus died even before the messenger would have reported to them both the news of his delay. Jesus waited to show them that He, as friend, was also Messiah. He rescued them from the pain of thinking

this life was all there is. He rescued Lazarus to give him one more chance to live. And he rescued his people from the false beliefs about sickness and death, beliefs that meant God's punishment or wrath.

Christ wants to rescue us, too. We seem to put ourselves into tombs with great big stones in the entrance. Like Lazarus, we can't move the stone alone. We need a community. That's why we come to the altar, shaped like a sarcophagus, where Christ's body and blood are offered.

We come as Christ's community to help each other move forward with faith, filled with new hope, and ready to share the love we have with the world God has given us, and with the people we meet each day.

Let us come out of our tombs of compulsions, addictions, our evil ways of thinking and making bad decisions, the tombs of prejudice, envy and jealousy, and our tendency to judge and condemn. We cannot come out of these tombs without help. We must learn to accept, love and forgive ourselves. God made us the way we are. Who are we to condemn, to not forgive, and to judge others? Let us ask for that help.

As we pray the Our Father today, may we see ourselves invited to forgive and be forgiven. Let's become a community that removes stone obstacles and burial bands so we can feel free and alive. Let's hear, "Come Out!" and "un-bind them" and respond, with 2 weeks before Easter, by leaving the stony obstacles that block our way to freedom from our worst selves, and leave what binds us and keeps us from loving God and neighbor.

May we rise with Christ, with Lazarus, to new life, a life of love and forgiveness, a life of caring and compassion, a life of one-ness and at-home-ness with our God.