

5th Sunday Lent A

My thanks to those of you who have logged in to join me this morning for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. It is a very different feel to preach to an empty church, to preach to empty pews. It is an odd feeling, and I hope I never get used to it. I know the Church is not the building, but the people. The Church comes from the word “ecclesia” which means “the people of God.” So I know you are with me, and I want you to know that you are in my mind and heart as I celebrate this Mass. I can picture you in my mind.

I would like to reflect with you on two things from the readings of today—especially the gospel. The first is the faith, confidence, and trust Martha had in Jesus. Jesus was told that Lazarus was sick, and they needed him to come and heal him. But Jesus did not get there until a few days later. By then Lazarus was dead and was in the tomb for four days. The gospel mentions twice that he was dead for four days. Why is the number four important? The Jews believed that after someone died, the soul lingered around the body for three days, waiting for an opportunity to reenter the body, and bring it back to life. But after three days, the soul left the body permanently, and there was no possibility of the person coming back to life. So, when the gospel says that he was in the tomb for four days, it means that Lazarus was really dead.

When Martha heard that Jesus was in town, she wasted no time. She ran out to meet him and said, “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask.” Here we see the faith, confidence, and trust of Martha in Jesus. Martha was going through a very rough time together with her sister, Mary. They lost their only brother, and the breadwinner of the family. Their world was turned upside down. Their future was uncertain. But Martha had tremendous faith in Jesus. When your world is turned upside down today, do you still have the faith, confidence, and trust in Jesus as Martha had?

The second point of my reflection is the humanity and the divinity of Jesus. There are only two occasions when Jesus wept. One was when Jesus was on the Mount of Olives. He looked at the City of Jerusalem and wept at its impending destruction. It was a blessing to visit this place during our last pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In the place where Jesus wept on the Mount of Olives today stands a church called “Dominus Flavis,” which means “the Lord wept.” We celebrated the Holy Mass inside this beautiful Church. It is built in the shape of a teardrop. Behind the altar is a glass window through which you can see the entire City of Jerusalem.

The second occasion when Jesus wept is at the death of Lazarus as we heard in the gospel of today. It shows how human Jesus was. As one like us, he too experienced human emotions of sadness, disappointment, anger (righteous), anxiety (in the garden), uncertainty, loneliness (when he was arrested and every one fled), and abandonment (hanging on the cross). Today, when we are going through unusual times and experiencing similar emotions, Jesus understands us. Having experienced the same emotions, today there is no one who would understand us better than Jesus. He was not just human but divine as well. He was the Son of God. He was the Lord of life. So, as the Son of God, there is no one who can help us better than Jesus. He can help us in a way that no humans can. He can help us beyond our wildest dreams. The humanity of Jesus inspires us, and the divinity of Jesus empowers us. To help us as the Son of God, all that Jesus

asks from us is our faith, trust, and confidence in him as Martha had. So, like Martha, let us say, "Yes. Lord. I believe." Yes. Lord. I believe that you are the son of God. I believe that you are the Resurrection and the Life.