

5th Sunday in Lent
Raising Lazarus from the Dead (JN 11:1-45)
Thom Trunzo

What a strange and unfamiliar Lent this has become! No Eucharist – No mass – No Stations of the Cross – No customary hymns – No Fish Fries – No familiar faces – No handshakes or welcoming hugs! In a time where we are in desperate need for spiritual life and human contact, we are sequestered and isolated from both; afraid to even pass by strangers in a grocery store or grab the handle of a gasoline pump!

We are like Martha & Mary in the gospel story today. Alone and helpless! They grieve for the death of their brother; for the human relationship that has been lost; for a changed world as they try to imagine what life will become. So too, in our own ways, a microscopic virus has caused us to feel alone and helpless, grieving for friends hidden away behind their own doors, hungry for our family gatherings at mass and for the Bread of Life that we have been accustomed to breaking and consuming together.

We are lost in this new reality, wondering what life will become and somehow knowing that, while this will pass, life will never be the same.

For some, the feelings may be more in line with Lazarus; hidden in the darkness from all the negative information flooding us through the media, shrouded with a different kind of loneliness and isolation.

In addition to these physical changes, there could, for some or even many, remain the personal effects of sin that fester and eat away spiritually and emotionally; guilt, remorse, shame, anger, hate, etc. And yet each day during this bizarre and totally unfamiliar way of walking through our Lenten Season, each morning the rising of the sun breaks through the night to give us hope and reassurance that God is near.

For Mary, Martha and Lazarus, Jesus was their reason and answer. The sisters summoned Jesus, invited him back into their lives during their darkest moments and deepest grief. They first opened their arms and hearts to him, and then invited him into their lives and home. His arrival brought an immediate sense of comfort. Just standing in his presence, hearing his voice, feeling his embrace they were able to begin healing, to begin letting go of their heavy burden of sorrow, to begin to allow light in. And Jesus, upon seeing them, took on their pain and, as the scriptures point out, *...and Jesus wept*. He ordered the stone to be rolled back, and called Lazarus out of the darkness, out of the land of the dead and into the light of the living.

We are Martha & Mary! We are Lazarus hidden away and in darkness perhaps intensified by fear and the mandated isolation as well as through the effects of the burden of sin that we carry. Whether we can gather as a spiritual family or not, we only have to summon Jesus, to invite him into our homes and allow him to embrace us. We only need to ask him to roll away the stone that keeps us in the darkness so that we can return to life in the light. This light of joy can happen whether we are physically sequestered or not.

This too shall pass! And whenever it does, it will be like Easter morning! We will be free to dine at the Lord's Table again, to hold hands tightly during the Lord's Prayer, and to share the warmth of love that can only come from standing in the divine light as one Body of Christ. This is truly a season of Lent; our time in the desert to prepare for that new beginning of light and life. May this time be blessed.