

A Reflection from Fr. Canisius for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

Dear Parishioners,

Today's Gospel reading is filled with scenes of human frailties. First, in Bethany, we encounter the suffering surrounding a dying man. Lazarus is ill, and his sisters Martha and Mary are concerned about him and send a message to their friend, Jesus.

Second, we see threats to human safety. When Jesus announces plans to go back to Judea, where they had recently been, his disciples question his intentions, for the Jews in Judea had tried to stone him. But Jesus explains that Lazarus has died, and that they must go.

Third, we see people mourning someone they love. We see Martha and Mary lamenting the loss of their brother, and we see Jewish people from neighboring towns who have come to comfort the two sisters. We even see Jesus, true God, and true Man, filled with emotion, weeping at the loss of his friend.

Finally, we see confusion and misunderstanding. The disciples do not fully understand Christ's mission, and even Thomas' bold comment, *Let us also go to die with him*, is well-meaning, if naïve. Jesus had also waited a few days before returning. He knows that this suffering will not end in death but will simply be used *for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it*. But Mary and Martha do not know this, and they bemoan his absence.

All of this human frailty apparent in this story, is familiar to our own lives. But what changes all of it? Faith! Martha proclaims that she has come to believe that Jesus is *the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world*.

All this human suffering was turned around because of faith. Faith convinces us of Christ's victory over death. Faith in the Resurrection rests on faith in God who is God of the Living. All our human suffering, losses and doubts are reimagined in light of our faith in Christ. This profound faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and Paul reminds us that the Spirit lives in us. With him, we can overcome anything, even death itself.

As we gather today at this Eucharist, let us be mindful of what we hope for. Let us also be mindful of what others around us hope for right now. When we experience God's radical hope, we are called to share it with others. A life of discipleship means to be an agent of God's hope.

Have a blessed week!

Fr. Canisius