

*FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT, APRIL 2, 2017*

*WHEN JESUS HEARD THAT LAZARUS WAS ILL HE SAID: "THIS ILLNESS IS NOT TO END IN DEATH, BUT IS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, THAT THE SON OF GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH IT"*

*BEGIN WITH THE STORY OF THE "EGGS"....SEE ATTACHED*

*SO, TOO, IT IS WITH TODAY'S GOSPEL STORY....*

*JESUS' APPROACH TO LAZARUS'S ILLNESS AND DEATH WAS NOT UNLIKE RACHEL'S MOTHER'S APPROACH TO HER DAUGHTER'S DIAGNOSIS ...*

*JESUS SAYS, "THIS ILLNESS IS NOT TO END IN DEATH, BUT IS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, THAT THE SON OF GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH IT"*

*THE CHALLENGE IS SIMILAR FOR US TOO, ISN'T IT - WHEN WE ARE FACING A TRANSITION, CHANGE, ILLNESS, ADVERSITY, IN OUR LIVES...*

*WE MUST PROCEED WITH THE ASSUMPTION THAT IN SOME WAY, HIDDEN TO US AT THE MOMENT, THE TRANSITION, THE SICKNESS, THE SETBACK, IS NOT ULTIMATELY AGAINST US...*

*IT IS A TIME NOT ONLY OF PAIN, FEAR, UNCERTAINTY AND*

*FRUSTRATION BUT ALSO A TIME OF QUESTIONING AND SEEKING - AND THEREFORE A PRIVILEGED TIME OF DISCOVERY - ONCE WE DISCOVER OUR UNIQUE RECIPE FOR A "SPONGE CAKE".....*

*OF COURSE, THERE ARE TRANSITIONS - AND THEN THERE ARE TRANSITIONS....*

*DEATH IS A TRANSITION CERTAINLY - BUT IN A CATEGORY ALL ITS OWN.....*

*LET US LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT THIS GOSPEL PASSAGE AND HOW MARTHA AND IN PARTICULAR MARY APPROACHED JESUS AND THEIR BROTHER'S DEATH....*

*BOTH ADDRESS JESUS WITH THE EXACT SAME WORDS: "LORD, IF YOU HAD BEEN HERE, MY BROTHER WOULD NOT HAVE DIED....."*

*IN OTHER WORDS, WHERE WERE YOU??? A HINT OF ANGER, NO DOUBT MARY, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO BE MORE DIRECTLY, EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY ENGAGED WITH JESUS ---*

*NOTICE THAT SHE ROSE QUICKLY AND WENT TO HIM, WHEN SHE SAW JESUS - SHE FELL AT HIS FEET...WEEPING*

*AS WE KNOW SHE WAS ALSO THE ONE WHO, ACCORDING TO JOHN, HAD ANOINTED THE LORD WITH PERFUMED OIL AND DRIED HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR...*

*THERE IS CLEARLY A CERTAIN INTIMACY - AND YES EVEN PHYSICAL INTIMACY - BETWEEN MARY AND JESUS...*

*TO ME IT IS LIKE SHE SURRENDERS HERSELF TO JESUS - AT HIS FEET - IN TEARS, IN EXCRUCIATING PAIN, SHE GIVES HERSELF AND HER PAIN OVER TO HIM - SEEKING HIS COMFORT IN THE MIDST OF HER DEEP LOSS.....*

*THIS SEEMS TO TOUCH JESUS DEEPLY...HER PRESENCE, HER TEARS, HER REACHING OUT TO HIM, HER VULNERABILITY....*

*HE BECOMES PERTURBED AND DEEPLY TROUBLED, BEGINS TO WEEP HIMSELF....AND ASK, "WHERE HAVE YOU LAID HIM?"*

*IT IS A TOUCHING MOMENT - HIGHLY CHARGED EMOTIONALLY....*

*MARY OF BETHANY FULLY ACKNOWLEDGES HER LOSS, EMBRACES AND EXPRESSES HER PAINFUL EMOTIONS, AND IS WILLING TO SEEK OUT NEEDED COMFORT...*

*THE PAIN AND THE TEARS BRING HER TO THE FEET OF JESUS - SEEKING COMFORT AND TRANSFORMATION OF HER PAIN IN THAT INTIMATE CONNECTION...*

*WE CAN LOOK TO MARY OF BETHANY WHO HAS GONE BEFORE US...*

*SO WE COME TOGETHER AT THIS EUCHARIST - AND RECALL THAT JESUS ON THE NIGHT BEFORE HIS FINAL PASSAGE GATHERED WITH HIS CLOSEST FOLLOWERS , SHARED A MEAL WITH THEM AND ASKED THEM TO REMEMBER HIM...*

*HE PROMISED TO REMAIN WITH THEM AND WITH US*

*SO WE REMEMBER HIM IN THIS EUCHARIST AND HIS GIFT OF HIMSELF TO US....*

*WE CELEBRATE THAT GIFT.....*

*WITH MARY OF BETHANY WE COME TO HIM AT THIS TABLE AND IN OUR OWN WAY PERHAPS FALL AT HIS FEET - IN TEARS AND WE HEAR THE WORDS: "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME, EVEN IF HE DIES, WILL LIVE, AND EVERYONE WHO LIVES AND BELIEVES IN ME WILL NEVER DIE"*