

Lent 5  
3.22.26

If I had to give a title to this homily, it would be this: “Waiting – It Stinks.”

We don't like waiting for anything. Students and teachers who will return to school on Monday / tomorrow, can't wait for the next vacation. If your money is running short, you can't wait for your next paycheck. If you had a biopsy or another medical test, you can't wait for the results. If you are a young couple who recently got engaged, you can't wait for your wedding and honeymoon. I remember as a boy anxiously waiting for the bus and the “El” because I couldn't wait to get to a Phillies or Flyers game. And in this moment, perhaps you can't wait for this homily to be over. You have places to go and things to do.

We spend a good part of our life waiting. And waiting stinks. But it is in the waiting that life happens. It is in the waiting that we should be most reflective and can receive the greatest insights. It is in the waiting that we learn to depend, fully depend, on the providential love of God. It is in the waiting that our faith grows and becomes stronger.

The gospel story is a case in point. God being God can do whatever God wants. Christ, the Son of God, could have healed his best friend Lazarus when he first heard the news that he was sick. But Jesus delayed. And Lazarus' sisters Mary and Martha waited. That had to stink.

Even when Lazarus died, Jesus didn't immediately finish what he was doing and go to his friends. As Mary and Martha dealt

with the grief of their brother's death, they waited. That had to stink.

When Jesus finally reached Mary and Martha they were overwhelmed with grief. It seems clear that they were even upset and angry with Jesus. Yes, they believed in the resurrection on the last day, but waiting till then...well, that stinks.

But it was in the waiting that Mary, Martha, and their whole village came to discover who Christ is and what Christ could do. Even when Christ wasn't present to Mary and Martha during their brother's illness, Jesus had them in mind. Even when they suffered and grieved those days after Lazarus died, Jesus held them close to his heart. Even when Mary and Martha cried in the presence of Jesus, Jesus wept along with them and assured them in that moment that he empathized with them and stood next to them in their darkest moment.

In the waiting, Mary and Martha experienced Christ's concern. In the waiting, he consoled them in their grief. In the waiting, he taught them that resurrection was possible not only at the end of time, but here and now. Jesus can *teach* a lesson about things like his concern for us, his ability to console, his desire to raise us up on the last day – but those notions became reality for Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the residents of Bethany, and even for us today in moments of waiting. It is in the waiting that most of life happens. It is in the waiting that we connect most profoundly with Christ. It is in the waiting that these hard lessons become real, that faith solidifies, that we grow stronger in our understanding and relationship with Christ.

My mother unexpectedly died at the age of 65. While *waiting* to celebrate her funeral Mass, through tears and heartache, I came to appreciate the many blessings she brought to me. I came to understand and embrace the love and consolation that deep friends offered. I came to experience how much love there was between my siblings, my dad, and me. To be honest, I just wanted to push through all the grief and shock at that time, and get back to a normal life. But by waiting, and living as best I could in the midst of profound loss and grief, I came to understand and experience all those things – and I felt how closely God was present to me through it all.

Waiting. It stinks. But it is in the waiting and in living as best we can in those challenging moments that we become the strong, faith-filled, and the fully human beings that God created and intended us to be.

There is one detail in this gospel story that has always struck me. When Lazarus comes out of the tomb, he is still wrapped in the burial cloths. Instead of removing those cloths himself, Jesus commands everyone around him to “untie (Lazarus) and let him go free.” What Christ does for us in the waiting – strengthening us, deepening our faith, and re-creating us in his image - *he wants us to do for others.*

Resurrection doesn't just happen on the last day. Resurrection is present in our midst each and every day...and especially in the waiting. Christ is most present to us in those in-between moments. And Christ is most present to others when we do what we can to untie them and let them go free – from whatever binds

them and keeps them down. Resurrection is found in those moments, in those actions, and most especially in the waiting...even though the waiting still stinks.

(Director of Music sings the second verse, chorus, fourth verse, and chorus of We Will Rise Again.)