

Reflection from Fr. Colm on the raising of Lazarus

Audio posted to the Parish Website on Saturday 28th March 2020

Good morning everybody. Hello to all in our parish of the Durham Martyrs Parish. I do hope you're okay and coping with these extraordinary changes to our lives. My Lord, who would've thought it six months ago, three months ago, one month ago? For some of us it'll be a real confinement, for others it will be a constriction that might stretch our patience to the limit, to others it may be an opportunity to catch up in contacting friends and relatives. For me it's been a bit of all three really. However, I'd like to focus on the latter one, the contacts etc, friends I've been in touch with recently that I hadn't been in communication with for some time, more often than not they've phoned, texted or emailed to see how I was and I think one of the great things coming out of all this is the value of social media, isn't it? Technology. You hear it being knocked, criticised, yes it can be abused like so many other agents, but gosh it has come into its own I think of late.

Back to myself - it is humbling to know that I fall under the category of the vulnerable because of my age but I suppose there are times when our own physical limitations have to be accepted too and this is such a time I think for many of us. So how have you filled in your time? For myself, well, reading, watching television, listening to radio, reflecting and perhaps seeing the house in which I live in a more clearly and defined way, looking at things more closely. Stephen Fry was on Andrew Marr last Sunday morning and he talked about his own confinement and how he adapts now to what's taking place in his life by "taking his time about the ordinary, washing the dishes, cleaning the floors." These are ways of adapting, aren't they?

However, the stories that we constantly hear on a daily basis can be suffocating in many ways and the negativity that we hear, the negative news, real news of course, statistics, deaths, etc for me I have found it necessary to perhaps ease my way out of watching and listening to such stories. How I delight maybe watching the news when somebody, some newsreader with a smile on his or her face says "And now for some good news."

Well that's what I'm saying now to each and every one of you and to myself - "And now for some good news." Because that's what today's Gospel is about - Lazarus and the raising of Lazarus.

Martha, Mary, Lazarus that family of three, different personalities, they seem to have something that really Jesus found warm, welcoming, they're

kind, a place where he could be listened to perhaps? Just chill. However, this is changed dramatically with the death of Lazarus. Jesus is brought into a situation of great challenge to himself. Challenge in the context, we're told very clearly by St John, that He wept. "*Jesus wept.*"

And then we're told when He heard and He realised the challenge ahead of Him, looking at the tomb in which Lazarus lay bound, that a sigh that came straight from the heart and he shouted out, *shouted out* - we're hearing all these wonderful physical expressions. We're learning more about the personality of Jesus in this Gospel, as few others.

These are the emotions, I think, that all of us are experiencing too at the moment. When I say emotions - the feeling of, a sense of helplessness. What can I do? How can I help? If I'm stuck at home, what do I say? What do I do? Can I accept indeed the help that maybe family members, younger members might want? Can I accept the limitations placed on my own activities and movements? It seems, that perhaps, some of the older generation in the parish, find that naturally enough, the most difficult to do. However this is what we're asked at this time, it's a time in which we can tune in again via media to Mass on a daily basis from various parts of the world, we can listen, we can reflect, we can pray, we can read - a multiplicity of things that we *can* do and are doing. And we are adapting - we will adapt even more.

And it's all about paradox, it's finding life in the ordinary here and now. That's what paradox is about. That's what the Gospel today is about. The paradox of life and death. Death does not have that same power over us, as we listen to this Gospel which is *very* often used at funerals and you can see why, because of the sense of positivity about it, the sense of optimism, the sense of anticipation, the sense and this one word that we need *desperately* today that word is **hope**.

Johann Tauler was a 14th century Dominican and he wrote "*If only we could seek joy and sadness, peace and trouble, simplicity in multiplicity, comfort in bitterness, this is the way to become a true witness to God.*" That's what paradox is about in our lives today. That's what we as Christians, we as Catholics are called to perhaps explore more within the confines of our own hermitages which are now our homes. So, in many ways we've become contemplatives overnight.

Bless you all, and I will keep in touch. Do keep in touch with me also and let's pray for each other because we will come through this.