

## 04/06/14 ..... 5 Lent A

-- It was the fall of 1997 and my mom (who survived breast cancer) was in a lot of pain. Her regular doctor had recently retired, so she was hesitant at first to go to a new doctor. Finally, she did.

-- She was put in the hospital for some tests, one of which came back as inconclusive. But there wasn't an immediate follow up. About a month or so later she was readmitted. The cancer had hit her liver. We knew it was too late to save her. Within six weeks or so, she was dead.

-- Our family's story is by no means unique. Death is never convenient. My mom was 67: too young, in my book, to be gone. So often many of us wonder *If only we'd gotten her to the doctor sooner... If only we had tried this treatment....If only...If only.*

-- Both Martha and Mary echo that sentiment in the gospel: *If only you had been here my brother would not have died.* In their opinion, Jesus had taken his good old time getting there. He was their friend, but at that point they were not terribly happy with him.

-- When we're honest about it, we are not always happy with God. We want God to solve our problems. We're impatient when God doesn't seem to act, especially if we are praying on behalf of someone who is deserving in our eyes.

-- Why is death so painful, especially when we know we all will have to face it one day? The fact is, it's never easy to say goodbye to someone we love. And, guess what, it wasn't easy for Jesus, either.

-- When he got to Lazarus' house, the first thing he wanted to do was to see the tomb. As he walked over to it, he began to weep—and these were not fake tears. This was his good friend; his sisters were in great pain. He shared that pain with them.

-- Jesus shares our pain as well. Jesus doesn't always take away suffering. He's not the magic "cure-all." But he does accompany us when we suffer. He is with us in our sorrow.

-- Jesus doesn't prevent all tragedies, such as this week's shooting at Fort Hood. Mentally troubled people continue to do bad things. But Jesus is just as outraged as we are. He cries out as he did at Lazarus' tomb.

-- When Jesus raised Lazarus he clearly showed us God's power over life and death. He assured those around him that resurrection from the dead is more than a vague hope for the future.

-- Even as he walked to Lazarus' tomb, he was beginning to see the writing on the wall. It would not be long before he would be laid in a similar tomb. But he trusted in his heavenly Father.

-- Yes, Lazarus was raised from the dead. But some years later, he would die once again. Jesus died just a short time after this, but his resurrection was to new life.

-- He promises that for all of us: *I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even if he die, will live....* He asks us, as he asked Martha, whether we believe.

-- This weekend, we have our final public prayers for those who will be baptized into new life this Easter vigil. They are embracing Jesus' promise of new life. But they will need our help and God's to continue living that life in Christ.

-- So do all of us. But Jesus accompanies us on the journey. He laughs when we laugh and cries when we cry. He helps us bear our pain. And, in the end, he leads us to new life, a life that will never end.

-- Do **we** truly believe this???