

**04/02/17 ..... 5 Lent C**

-- Recently I was listening to a retired UM Bishop speaking about a detail in our gospel. He admitted that he focused on it because he is not a very patient person. It is the fact that, when Jesus got the word that Lazarus was very sick, he waited two days before going to see him.

-- Just imagine if I got a call from one of you, faithful parish members, on a Sunday evening. You tell me your mother is dying and you want me to see her. And she lives out in the country a few miles from here.

-- Suppose I'd say, *Oh, I'm tired and tomorrow is my day off. I will come Tuesday afternoon or Wednesday morning.* I would imagine you'd be rather put off by that, especially if she died in the meantime. And that would be perfectly understandable.

-- So you can understand Martha's reaction when Jesus, one of their very best friends, finally ambled into town after taking his good old time, after Lazarus had died. I'm sure she felt more than a bit let down.

-- And I bet it took quite a bit of faith for her to bite her tongue when Jesus, in effect, said, *Trust me.* Only their long-standing friendship would have made that possible.

-- Of course, we know how the story turned out. Lazarus was raised back to life. Jesus gave credibility to his statement *I am the resurrection and the life.* But it was only after several days of what must have felt like living hell.

-- I'm sure I picked up on this detail because I, too, am not the most patient person in the world. Those of you who know me well enough can testify to that. But I suspect that many of us are impatient in our relationship with God.

-- We ask God for something, and we truly believe it is something good. But we don't seem to get an answer, or the answer we seem to get is not what we're looking for. We want God's attention—right now!

-- Yes, we believe in the grace of God, but we easily forget that God's grace is not programmable. We can't snap our fingers, or perform some good act that will obligate God to be at our beck and command.

-- Like Martha, we must develop that friendship with the Lord that will help us bite our tongue when Jesus tells us, *Trust me*. That takes a habit of regular prayer and worship to develop.

-- Most of us want to be in control of our lives, but often the Lord is challenging us to live our lives out of control. That doesn't mean living without discipline—rather, it means exercising radical trust.

-- 40 years ago this weekend, I entered the first level of Holy Orders when I was ordained a deacon. I know I had a vision of what my ministry would be like, and I knew I would face challenges.

-- Perhaps the biggest challenge, though, has turned out to be to trust in God when circumstances were beyond my control. Doing the expected things in ministry has usually been relatively easy. It's been much more difficult to deal patiently with the unexpected (and last minute) things.

-- Yet God calls me...and you...to do just that. We must allow God to be God....but on God's timeline, not ours. We don't set the schedule.

-- God's people has faced ups and downs throughout the centuries, and we continue to do so in our lives. God promises that we will see his glory, but it will be on God's timeline.

-- Will we develop that friendship with God that will allow us to trust in him, like Martha trusted Jesus? Even when we are not happy with God, can we still believe he is the resurrection and the life?