

## Seventh Sunday of Lent

Good Friday  
April 10, 2020  
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On Ash Wednesday, which seems like years ago now, we began this season of Lent by having ash smudged on our brows, to remind us that *we* too are ultimate akin to dirt and ash, from the earth, and that to the earth, we shall one day return. This evening we end Lent and start the Easter triduum by witnessing Jesus return to that same earth.

But this evening we do not behold a natural death, at home, surrounded by family and friends, his body cared for, his soul *consoled*. Rather Jesus dies an ugly death, tortured, ridiculed and abandoned. This is not a good death, but the worst of deaths, willingly undergone, that He might be able to identify with all of us in our own suffering and pain. Identify not just with the best of us but also with the worst of us and not each of us at our best, but even at our worst, when we are not at peace, but rather bitter and sullen, deaf to God's call, numb to his touch, blind to his presence. Christ dies such a death to demonstrate to us that he has been there before us, that he is with us even in our own darkest moments, like a parent with a hurt or angry child.

For what we need is a God we can believe in, even when we no longer believe in anything else, ourselves included. What we need is a *savior* who knows what it is like to suffer, even to despair, a savior who can cry out at his moment of death "my God, my God why have you abandoned me?" before he surrenders his own spirit, in blind faith to that very God he *cannot* see, or feel or hear, but who remains his Father... and ours. What we need is a savior whose love never dies, no matter the cost.

In our culture we like to symbolize a love that is to last forever with diamonds. For diamonds too last forever. But love and diamonds last forever for very different reasons. Diamonds are forever because they are harder and stronger than anything that might oppose them. Love however, and especially God's love, incarnate in Jesus Christ dying on his cross, God's love is forever precisely because his body *has* been broken, because his heart has been pierced, because his life has been poured out, poured out into our own. Diamonds are forever, but their very impenetrability insures that they are also sterile. On them nothing can grow, nothing can bond. Life, though must be vulnerable to its surroundings, for it feeds off its environment. Life must be breakable, like a clod of dirt, to be fertile, to bear life.

This evening we witness not the proud death of a valiant hero or the serene death of a wise elder, but the sacrificial death of a humble savior. *AHumility@* comes from *AHumus@* the Latin word for earth. This evening our Savior is humbled, humiliated even--he is ground into the dirt, his body broken, as we might break a clod of dirt. But it is from such humiliation that our own lives can take root. Our savior is indeed a poor soul this day, but as he himself had taught to whoever would listen, a poor soul is a porous soul, a soul through which the Glory of God is able to pour out.

And we end this evening, not in exultant ecstasy over his coming triumph over death, but in his succumbing to death and being sealed in a tomb. How appropriate, how resonant to our own lives right now. For we are all sealed off from one another these days. We are all encased in our

homes, leaving only when and if absolutely necessary, and even then staying apart, never touching anyone we might encounter on the street or in the workplace, communicating only through screens.

And yet the tomb is not only a place of death. For the Egyptians the tomb was imagined to be a place of alchemical transformation, in which the dead Pharaoh's soul travels through the underworld on the solar barque to rise in the morning with the sun, alight, radiant, a spark of the divine himself, with Ra-Amun, luminous and glorious, lighting the earth. Suffering too reduces our feelings, distills our desires, refines and transforms our leaden soul into a wise and compassionate spirit, gleaming golden, lighting the dark, turning night into day.

I invite you to spend time with Christ in the tomb tomorrow, and to reflect over how your own forced isolation may afford you the opportunity to step back, stop and reflect over what you now miss that you could so cavalierly overlook and easily take for granted last Ash Wednesday. In so doing may we all see and feel and hear how God may be raising us up to new life, to cherish next month what we miss this month. May our time enclosed, like a monk in his monastery, a nun in her cell, enkindle a spark of the divine within us too, that we might be transmuted into who we were created to be all along, become our true self, and follow our true calling with Christ, his people, his creation.