

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

March 26, 2023 • 5th Sunday of Lent • John 11:1-45

Making Peace With Suffering

Jesus receives word that his friend Lazarus has died. He returns to Bethany to be with Mary and Martha, Lazarus's sisters. Before Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, he shows genuine human compassion. His first response to seeing his friends' sadness is to weep with them.

Even in Jesus' time, people questioned why they had to suffer. When Lazarus becomes deathly ill, Martha and Mary send for Jesus. When he does not arrive until it is too late, Lazarus's sister challenges Jesus, asking why he did not come sooner to save her brother.

I remember sitting at the bedside of a thirteen-year-old girl who knew she was dying. She suffered for days before she finally died. At the funeral I listened to some of the comments. "God has his reasons," and "God is just testing us." I wondered who the God was they were talking about.

Don't we say, and believe, that God loves us even more than we love our own children? I could not imagine any reason I would cause a child of mine to suffer that much. And what kind of a parent uses the suffering of his own little girl to test some grown-ups?

Suffering happens. It is part of life. No one, not the richest person or poorest, not saint or sinner, can get through life without suffering. God doesn't cause it; God doesn't plan it. Suffering is a part of our fallen human nature. God is just there to see us through it.

When you say yes to God, accept your humanness, and ask for God's help through your pain,

God's strength and life becomes your strength and life. Your yes opens you up to the peace, courage and perseverance that God's love offers. It is so much easier to endure suffering when you know that your good God is with you, as close as the next breath you take.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Ask family members to talk about the most difficult thing that happened this week. Pray to let go of any uncomfortable emotions that are left over. Ask them to close their eyes and slowly breathe in and out. Ask them to imagine that their breath is the Holy Spirit healing their hearts.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

What has caused you the most suffering in your life? If it is still with you today, how can you ease the pain? What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?