

## Homily Rerun: April 2, 2017 - Fr Seno



My dear people of Peace, is there anyone here who does not needs a friend, or want a friend? I think everyone needs a friend – even Jesus. In the village of Bethany Jesus had three very special friends – the sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus. Their house remained open to Him always. When Lazarus got sick, it was only natural that the first one the two sisters should turn to for help was Jesus. They sent an urgent message to Him, understood in language and calculated to appeal to his heart. They simply said, “Master, the one you love is ill” (Jn 11: 3). Their hope was that Jesus would stop everything and come and cure him.

But Jesus did not; instead he stayed on where He was for two whole days. His delay in coming must have been heartbreaking for Martha and Mary. Right in front of their eyes their brother’s life was ebbing away. And Jesus that they believed could do something about it was not there.

The death of Lazarus in today’s Gospel leaves a large absence in the lives of those who loved him. Mary seems to have been the worst person that the death of Lazarus affected most. She would not even leave the house. While they had sympathizer around them, the one they most wanted to be with them was not there. Jesus, their friend and the friend of Lazarus, was absent. And when he finally came, they suggested that he could have prevented this death. Martha said to Jesus “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died”. (Jn 11:33).

The anguish experienced by Martha and Mary is what many of us have experienced in life. And when something bad happens to us, or to a loved one, we cannot help thinking that if God really cared about us, if God really loved us, then he would not have allowed this bad thing to happen. We feel abandoned by God. We feel he has left us alone. Listen to this true story: A priest from my diocese went with his classmates to the beach to celebrate one of their priest’s friend who got admission to study overseas. His classmates gathered to celebrate with him. They were at the beach swimming when a strong wave came and swept away my diocesan priest and the priest that they were celebrating that is travelling. My Diocesan priest was rescued but the other priest was swept away. They never saw his body till date. They were all devastated and their joy that day turn to sorry. They all questioned why is it that this should happen to him now?

My dear people of peace, instead of questioning, we must try to imitate Martha. The Gospel today presents her as a model of faith. In her hour of grief, she ran to the Lord and poured out her sorrow to Him. Whom do you go to when you are in a worried situation and when all hope is gone? Here in our Parish the Blessed Sacrament is exposed the whole of Friday after Mass to Saturday morning before Mass. How many of us have gone to Him to ask him for help without Him answering us. And when Jesus challenged her to believe, she made a wonderful profession of faith: she said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world”. (Jn 11: 27)

My dear people of Peace, what we are to do in a difficult situation is to turn to God. We have to go on praying, and believing in God. Neither a good life, nor a close relationship with God, will necessarily save a person from death. In the face of our pain all we can do is to commend ourselves to God, and abandon ourselves to His care.

When we suffer, it seems as though God is absent. But when we pray we come to realize that God is not absent, but is present in our suffering. God is with us as our hope in adversity, and our strength in weakness. The story shows Jesus as a faithful friend.

### **What a friend we have in Jesus**

What a friend we have in Jesus  
All our sins and grieves to bear  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged  
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Oh, what peace we often forfeit  
Oh, what needless pain we bear  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer!

Can we find a friend so faithful?  
Who will all our sorrow share  
Jesus knows our every weakness  
Take it to the Lord in prayer

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, delay is not denial. It shows that even in death we are not beyond the reach of His help. He called Lazarus to come out. He did not leave Martha and Mary to grieve alone. So He will not leave us in our point of need. Do you know the best moment to go Him? It is during the breaking of Bread, the time of consecration when the ordinary bread turn to Body of Jesus and the ordinary wine turns to the Blood of Jesus. That is the most sacred time of the Liturgy. He came to them at the height of their grief, shared their sorrow, and gave them hope by announcing eternal life to those who believe in him. Jesus does not leave us alone either. He surrounds us with the love and support of the community. And he challenges us to have faith in Him.

The raising of Lazarus from the death is an indication of what Jesus does for us today: he calls us away from all that leads to death, namely, sin. Death can take place even while we are alive. Without Christ, we are dead. Eternal life is not a future event, it is here and now. Living in the spirit of Jesus, in love and for love of God, we have a foretaste of life eternal in Christ: life in fullness.