

"Come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning. Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn, turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent." Joel 2:12-13

Have you ever felt as if God had let you down, had withdrawn His protecting arm from you? Even the question seems foolish, because we know the answer before we ask it. Just look around and see how the world struggling with Covid-19 virus. We pastors have seen parents pray earnestly for a sick baby, and then have gone to the cemetery to bury the much-prayed-for child. We see thousands of people dying all over the world even though we continue to pray for deliverance.

In such trying moments, we ask: "Look, if prayer is the answer, why don't I get an answer to my prayers? Why doesn't God speak? Why is He so silent?" A very difficult question to answer. There is an old poem by a Hindu poet named Ravindra Kumar Karmani. In this poem he writes:

A child whispered, "*God, speak to me*" And a nightingale sang. The child did not hear.

So, the child yelled, "*God, speak to me!*" And the thunder rolled across the sky but the child did not listen.

The child looked around and said, "*God, let me see you*" and a star shone brightly. But the child did not notice.

And the child shouted, "*God, show me a miracle!*" And a life was born but the child did not know.

So, the child cried out in despair, "*Touch me, God, and let me know you are here!*"

Whereupon God reached down and touched the child. But the child brushed the butterfly away and walked away unknowingly.

Before we pronounce judgment or arrive at any false conclusions in these trying times, let us consider it from various angles. Even though Jesus loved Lazarus, Martha, and Mary dearly, he still delayed in coming to their rescue. His apparent silence is not to be construed as indifference. God's greatest manifestations of power are always silent. The forces which hold the world and the planets in their orbits are the most powerful conceivable; and yet, these forces are perfectly silent.

Consider the force of gravity that pulls all objects to the center of the earth. If an object has sufficient density to weigh a ton, there is a 2,000-pound pull on that object. Yet it operates in absolute silence. No one has ever heard the pull of gravity.

There is a great power in the light of the sun. We are just beginning to capture the power of cosmic rays. Scientists have already devised ways to heat homes in the winter by sun rays stored up in the summer. Yet, the powerful light of the sun, comes in absolute silence.

Even with this terrible global pandemic we face today, do you not see God working silently bringing people together, caring for one another around the world? Be it in Italy, Spain or France, people are caring for each other in a way we would never imagine. See what is happening in our country as the big and small industries, big and small businesses, rich and poor citizens coming together to help and support the neediest and the most vulnerable. God silently brings out the goodness within us. Now, we appreciate and thank the thousands of doctors, nurses, and health workers sacrificing their lives, working 24/7 to bring relief, health and life to the sick and the infected. God is teaching us silently a lesson we would have never learned otherwise in life.

With all these evidences how God works, people still see Jesus and God's word with their human eyes and limited vision. People understand his words in the normal human way, but Jesus wants to raise people's thinking and understanding to a new higher way of looking at life, suffering, and death. His words surprise people, because he is asking them to see him and his words as divine rather than human.

Jesus said, "*Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" Those who were listening misunderstood and thought he was talking of the temple in Jerusalem. They said it took forty-six years to build the temple, but Jesus was talking of his own body. When Jesus rose from the dead his disciples remembered and believed.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.*" Nicodemus misunderstood and asked, "How can anyone who is already old be born? Is it possible to go back into the womb again and be born?" Jesus has to further clarify, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit; what is born of human nature is human; what is born of the Spirit is Spirit.

Jesus asked the woman by the well in Samaria for a drink. When she complained because he was a Jew he answered, "*if you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me something to drink,' you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.*" She misunderstands and thinks Jesus will offer her magic so that she won't have to come to the well every day. So, Jesus clarifies further, "whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life."

Jesus said, "*Whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.*" But they quarreled among themselves saying: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" But Jesus said, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day." At this many of Jesus' disciples abandoned him and returned to their former lives.

Today Jesus is asking us as he asked Mary and Martha, to see him in a new way, divine rather than human. And so, we come to today's Gospel where Jesus said to Martha, "*Your brother will rise.*" Martha said: "I

know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” But Jesus wants to take her to a new understanding of resurrection, *“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”*

Jesus wants Martha to know that it is through Him that Lazarus and all of us will rise again. Jesus is the resurrection. Jesus also wants Martha and us to know that for anyone who believes in Him, death has only the appearance of death because we live after death, *“whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.”* When we live as Jesus calls us there is a continuation from this life to the next. So, the resurrection is not just something in the future, Jesus offers life now. The new life in the resurrection is for now. To prove his words to Martha, Jesus raised Lazarus. Don’t miss out on the offer of Jesus’ life to you now. Whatever we are going through now, let us trust God and live our lives with Jesus.

How can we live this life of Jesus now? Jesus offers us his life every time we come to Mass, every time we receive the sacraments, every time we pray, every time we read Sacred Scripture. The sacraments are the special ways we meet Jesus. In the sacraments we touch Jesus and Jesus comes to us. Jesus gave us the sacraments to lift us up to everlasting life. Allow Jesus to rise you up to new life. **The resurrection is not just something in the future, Jesus offers life now.**

Let us receive Jesus Spiritually in our hearts, since we are unable to receive him physically.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,

I believe that You

are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love You above all things,

and I desire to receive You into my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment

receive You sacramentally,

come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

Amen.