

## *The Tombs We Live In*

Underlying the Scriptures today is the consistent message of God's covenant which is rooted in compassion for the human experience. The deeply moving response of Jesus to his dear friend's death shows us the power of that compassion. This is the relationship God has established with each one of us; it is irrevocable and unconditional. "I will put my spirit in you that you may live." God's covenant is life-giving.

For our part, we must be willing to accept that covenant and be wholly attentive to God's will in our lives, which is profoundly simple: to imitate in all we do and say that same covenant of love: "Love one another as I have loved you." God is calling each one of us to the same covenant relationship with one another! The acceptance of one another in honesty and trust is essential to living out the covenant relationship God has established with us.

In this age of Covid 19, we find ourselves strangely entombed and awaiting healing. We yearn to be set free! Perhaps we can turn our current isolation into a pre-Easter meditation on our relationships.

We might look at this Sunday's Scriptural theme as a reflection on all that traps us in *unhealthy ways of separating ourselves from others*. Just as in the Lazarus story, God's life-giving love can call us out of our lifeless tombs: "Untie him and let him go."

What binds us into lifeless relationships? Our Covid 19 Lenten journey leads us to just that self-examination. What we in our Catholic tradition call "An Examination of Conscience" attempts to penetrate the depths of our relationships with God, others and self. As "story-telling" people, this is one of our more uncomfortable rituals.

A remarkably revealing Examination of Conscience, developed by Dorothy Datchuck Sanchez, captures the relational character of our personal stories and underscores what traps us in lifeless tombs. Published in 2005 in *Celebration*, a now defunct publication of the National Catholic Reporter, Ms. Sanchez offers a penetrating and yet non-threatening means of reviewing our relationships. Used to search past and present, it can help heal and renew relationships as we look to Easter.

**In our relationship with God:**

*denying a hunger for God  
despair and distrust  
disbelief in God's love.*

**In our relationships with others:**

*friendships that are left to wither  
ethnic jokes that fuel racism  
angry words and abusive actions  
ignoring and even resenting the poor  
the little lies and the face-saving untruths*

**And even our relationship with ourselves:**

*our own self-pity  
denying our brokenness  
our unwillingness to forgive  
not believing in God's forgiveness.*

The raising of Lazarus tells us not only of the power of the Christ over death, but also his power over that which entombs us and our relationships. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are set free from the brokenness of those experiences that drain the life out of our relationships. Through the Eucharist we acknowledge the most important part of our story captured by Saint Paul in the Letter to the Romans:

*But if Christ is in you,  
although the body is dead because of sin,  
the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

Because of our faith, we are Lazarus, as Christ commands us:

*“Untie him and let him go.”*

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## ***Further Sabbath Reflections for the Coming Week***

***Where is your story in the Sacred Story this week?***

***What are the tombs that drain the life out of you?***

***What will lead you out of those tombs?***

***How could the Covid 19 pandemic actually set you free?***

*(See the poem PANDEMIC above under NEWS on the Home Page.)*