

Matt Savoy Funeral Homily

Reading I, Ez 37:12-14

Thus says the LORD GOD: O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and have you rise from them, O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the LORD. I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

GOSPEL John 11:5-7, 22-27, 32-38, 41-45

"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. (But) even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "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. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.

When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." ...So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him."

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There are few things in our lives that will challenge and overwhelm our faith like death does. The Scriptures today are about death and yet we are not touched by a morbid theme with no hope. Intellectually we know death is the fate of all of us. Yet when it strikes, especially when it happens suddenly, it can crush us with sadness. Grief is the most solitary emotion I think we will ever have ...it makes islands of us all. Even Jesus wept. We are helpless to rise up out of the death that afflicts us. It looks like death won. For this very reason, we need to reflect on God loving us so much that He alone transforms death into life.

When I read the Facebook post by Lisa Squires, I immediately agreed..."I loved Matt. He was an irreverent friend." I mean, after all, he always called me "Dave"...never "Mr. Fraser", or even "Rog". No, I was "Dave" because he thought I looked like Dave Letterman....I guess it was a compliment....the way he said it with that smile on his face, I knew he wasn't dissing me.

God promised and He did it...He put a spirit into us and opened the graves so we may live...His spirit dwelling within us since our Baptism gives us life. And, Jesus raised Lazarus from death into life so that we would believe that He is the resurrection and the life. We heard Martha confess her faith to Jesus. But, her faith formed long before seeing her brother rise from the dead. Like Martha, our faith does not rest on proof of what we see...it rests in our hearts with what we know is true.

And, we all know, we all have stories about how Matt was quite a larger-than-life character who with that devious smile on his face made us laugh, even when he wasn't trying to. I'll never forget the time my wife and I were listening to the news and a report came on about a house in Atlanta that was on fire. The firemen couldn't put the fire out because bullets were exploding out of the house, set off by the heat. Truth be told, I did imagine the unsavory characters whose house it was. Little did we know it was Matt's

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house and his ammo that was exploding...in the rental he had with Billy and my son Matt. Thank God no one was hurt. And, I remember how impressed I was with the number of friends who showed up in the following weeks to help them out.

Today we are asked to trust a promise made to us, that even though we die, we will come back to life in the love of Jesus who is our resurrection. If we live and die in that belief, then it is with Martha, Mary and Lazarus; with the Apostles; with the ancient saints; with our loved ones; with Matt...they are gone, but they are not forgotten....These are all the people we pray for daily...if we live and die in the belief that we come to life in the love of Jesus, nothing of their goodness and grace will be lost and forgotten in a grave somewhere. Death didn't win.

God promised and He did it. These readings are given to us today so that we will make a choice...so that we will choose resurrection and life! So that we will choose Jesus!

Let us never forget that God loves us so much that He alone transforms death into life.

Dear Matt, our irreverent friend, we love you. Rest in Peace...Live in Peace!