

HOW AM I GOING TO GET IN?

In the past week the impact of the corona virus has increased in my life. I have been called to anoint ten different people. Most of them with this virus. Almost all were in Nursing Facilities; some in a special section cordoned off just to care for those who need to be quarantined. It is not business as usual in any of these places. I had to receive a clearance beforehand. I had to wear a hospital mask, wear surgical gloves, be told which entry is open, have my temperature taken (both upon arrival and when leaving), answer a series of questions about my own health and my own exposure to the virus. After each encounter the gloves come off, the intense washing of hands, new gloves, new gown and so forth.

All of that is just so that I will know how to find my way in to the facility. Only then can I be led to the resident and only then pray with them and pray for them and anoint them with the healing olive oil. All of that just to find my way in. Finding our way in, in life, is something we do all the time. We recognize intuitively how important it is to know the way in, in all kinds of situations. We are always seeking such knowledge—in all aspects of daily life whether at home or at work.

Jesus knows this. He knows we want to find the way into that life which will truly last, that life which lasts forever. If we are wise, we realize we cannot get there on our own; we cannot get in on our own. We need a guide, someone who can lead us, someone who knows his way around, someone very knowledgeable, someone upon whom we can rely. Jesus of Nazareth, in today's gospel, tell us that he is such a person. He knows the way. He knows the way in. The way into life everlasting. He even tells us that he is the gate itself. No one can come in, enter into the Father's kingdom, except through Jesus.

Jesus told us that sheep recognize the voice of their shepherd. They listen for that voice. We do too. We listen to him. We listen for his voice—to guide us. What does his voice say? "This is my body." "Father, forgive them." "Follow me." "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." I am the way in. And that is why he calls himself the gate. My friends, Easter with its victory over the grave is the great revelation of who Jesus is, and the righteous deed he has performed.

We look at Jesus on the crucifix, nailed to that cross. We see his brokenness. We see his wounds. We see how evil sought to destroy him precisely because he was so good. We get it. We get what happens to people sometimes in this life. But Jesus gets it too. And that helps us. He experienced all of that so that whenever we look at him we will know. Know what? Know that He knows. Jesus knows what we go through in life. All of it. No need to explain. We recognize that he is one of us. One like us in all things but sin. BUT, this One is the Holy One of God; this

One is powerful in ways that I am not; this One is a healer—and I am wounded. This One is the only One who saves.

I spoke with a parishioner recently who said< “I used to want all the bad from my past taken away and the memory removed so I will never be troubled or reproached by it anymore. But now my heart has changed. Now I want it all. I want every dimension of my life and of me to be redeemed. I want to leave nothing of my past behind. Rather, I want it all to be redeemed. All of it. I want to be remade. Renewed. Transformed. Redeemed. I want nothing of my life to be lost or left behind.

How do I get there? How do I find my way in? By listening for his voice in the voices of those who know him the best. Just like I listened to those knowledgeable medical people who know best the way to deal effectively with this killer virus. Sin is the more ancient killer virus. Those who know what sin is and what it does and how it works and all its lies and deceptions, these are the ones we must listen to. They lead us to Jesus. And He shows us the way in. Yes, He is invisible. Yes. He rarely speaks directly to us. Yes. We struggle to hear his voice in our daily lives. But he is still our shepherd. He is still the voice that guides us. He is still the gate through which we are to enter into that life that does not end. Let us listen to his voice today and like the sheep of the shepherd, heed his voice.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.