

Mary said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

The thing that strikes me about Mary in today's gospel is that she wants something different from the life she has. She wants something new. And who among us today doesn't know what that's like? Haven't there been times when you wanted something different from the life you had? Haven't you sometimes wanted to be something new?

I think that desire for something new is revealed whenever we say, "If only (Fill in the blank)\_\_\_\_\_ " and then fill in the blank with whatever it is that would give us something different. I think we're looking for something new whenever we try to reinvent ourselves or look for a better version of ourselves. Sometimes grief and sorrow, exhaustion, confusion, or being overwhelmed cause us to wish or pray for something new. Other times loneliness, boredom, or the same old same old leave us looking for something new. Maybe guilt, regret, disappointment, or feeling stuck is *why* you want something new. It might also be, however, a sense of calling, a dream, or a passion that pushes you to seek something new.

I wonder what in you or your life today is wanting or needing to be made new. How would you complete this sentence: "Lord, if you had been here, \_\_\_\_\_?" What's the new, the something different, you're looking for today?

Whatever your answer might be, you've come to the right place. This is your day. All Saints' Sunday is a day of making new. Isn't that what we hear in God's revelation to John? Listen to what John says in Revelation.

- "I saw a new heaven and a new earth"
- "And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem", and
- "The one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.'"

"See, I am making all things new." That's the promise of this day and today's gospel is a story about fulfilling that promise. Listen to what Jesus says:

- "Take away the stone."
- "Lazarus, come out", and
- "Unbind him, and let him go."

Each of these statements is about making new, and it isn't just Lazarus being made new. It is also Mary and Martha being made new. On this All-Saints Day, one of our newer members, Sofia Ridgeway will be made new by water and the Holy Spirit as she is baptized, making her the newest saint in God's Holy Catholic and Apostolic church. More on baptism in a bit, but first we will look at the Saints, as this is indeed the day that we honor our spiritual heroes.

It is important I think to differentiate between what I like to call big S Saints and little s saints. When I refer to big S Saints, these are folks like St. John the Baptist, St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Teresa.

There are people in all aspects of life that are looked up to as special examples or heroes. Think of your favorite athlete, musician, scientist, or author. We need spiritual heroes also. When I refer to little s saints, these are the great multitude of believers who have come and gone before us that we may never even hear about. Little s saints are also those who we know personally who have deeply shaped our belief and love of God because of the way that they exemplify God's love in the world. It is appropriate to celebrate these lesser-known heroes as well and yesterday at our "All Souls" service, we did just that.

However, when we conceptualize who a saint is, we often talk about saints as if they are somehow morally or spiritually superior to us, as if they had it all together and did everything right. But what if that's a misunderstanding of this day and the saints? What if saints are ones who entrust themselves to being made new? What if saints are ones who participate in God's making all things new? What if saints are ones who let themselves be made new and who make new in the lives of others?

Although vastly different from one another, the saints who are venerated by

the church all have some basic things in common. They were all human beings who were formed and shaped into something new through their faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

That's what I've seen and experienced with saints in my life. I remember with love and gratitude Anthony of Egypt, Julian of Norwich, John of the Cross, my friend Adam, my grandparents. I saw them working out newness in each of their lives and I experienced and was challenged by them bringing newness to my life. I still am.

The saints still speak to and show up in our lives. So, when have you seen newness happening in the life of another? When has another brought about newness in your life? What I'm really asking is this: Who are the saints in your life?

Being made new, however, isn't something that just happens to us. It's something we actively participate in, for ourselves and each other. It's an ongoing process, a continual unfolding and opening of our lives. Look at how beautifully that's revealed in today's gospel. First, Jesus asked Mary, "Where have you laid him?" He's asking her to name and point to the parts of herself and her life that need making new. How would you answer Jesus' question? Where have you laid the Lazarus of your life?

We can't just turn away from, ignore, repress, or walk away from those parts of ourselves and our lives that need making new. This isn't about replacing the old, but making the old new. And that starts with naming what needs to be made new in our lives today.

Second, Jesus said, "Take away the stone." What are the stones that get in your way and keep you from making a change? In what ways has your life become hardened and closed? What keeps you from stepping into a new way of being, seeing, thinking, or living? What do you need to do to "take away the stone" and who could help you with that?

Third, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'" What's the first step you need to take in order to come out, to be made new? And what's the next and the one after that? Remember, being made new is a process. Jesus isn't asking us to do anything he hasn't already done. He also took a first step out of the tomb, "so we too might walk in newness of life".

Finally, Jesus said, "Unbind him, and let him go." As long as we are unwilling to unbind and let go nothing can be made new. What parts of your life do you need to unbind? What do you need to let go of?

Don't you want to walk in newness of life? I do. I believe that Sofia wants to walk in newness of life, and that all who witness her baptism and

renew their baptismal vows wants to also. Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.

Baptism is one of the most important and initial steps in the process that we take as we walk in newness of life. A vastly important step but not the only step in this continual process of transformation and new life in Christ. Shortly, Sofia's family, godparents, and all gathered here will make vows that will require all of us to, with God's help, to walk in newness of life... throughout our lives.

I don't want to leave here today the same person I was when I came in and I don't want you to either. I want us to each claim the promise of this day. I want us to do the hard work of being made new and helping others be made new.

I want us to be the saints God already knows us to be. I want us to each discover the newness that awaits us and step into a greater fullness of life. I want us to follow in the footsteps of Lazarus, Mary, Martha, and all the saints.

This is All Saints' Sunday, and you know what? All things are being made new.