

**1.IOP Penance Service is this Wednesday, March 29th at 6pm.**

**With that mentioned: I used portions of this reflection in my weekend homily / St. John's story of the death of Lazarus. Thank you Bishop Colacicco for your inspiration.**

**WE ARE ALL LAZARUS: Jesus visits his close friends in Bethany, a mere two miles from Jerusalem, where Jesus shall soon confront and defeat bodily death.**

**Of course this amazing story includes Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and "consequently, leaves the tomb empty. An interesting thought is that the tomb of Lazarus can be found in every parish church throughout the world. We call it the Confessional.**

**We walk into the tomb (Confessional) dead because of our sins, tied up by our weaknesses and pride. Yet, as we pour out our hearts to Jesus, we enter into the conversation of Jesus and Martha. We are encouraged toward a deeper faith.**

**When we enter the tomb perhaps we are sunk in an addiction. Maybe we have done things we're so ashamed of that we can't even bring ourself to speak of them. Maybe we've fallen out of relationship with the people we love the most. Maybe we have been first-class jerks. Maybe we just feel like a failure. Maybe we are terrified of dying. Jesus simply asks us to TRUST IN HIS MERCY. To listen to His voice / "UNTIE HIM AND LET HIM GO!"**

**"Lord, if you had been here." Jesus is waiting patiently for you and me because He desires to release and untie us of the burdens of our sins and imminent death. Filled with compassion Jesus longs to say to you: "I absolve you of your sins..."**

**And then we leave the tomb empty. We are Born Again / Cleansed and Free from sin / Filled with Life and Hope as we "too" may one day experience the bodily Resurrection of the dead.**

**Yes, the tomb is right here in our midst and Jesus is waiting, because we are all Lazarus.**

**2.Just a reminder of where we are with the BAA (Bishop's Annual Appeal).**

**Currently IOP is at 49% of our goal with \$59,431 committed. THANKS to all who have contributed thus far. Many important programs will continue because of your generosity (Vocations, Services to the poor and Catholic Education) to name a few.**

**Vivat Jesus: Father Vic Gournas**