

Fifth Sunday of Lent A2026

The fifth Sunday of Lent is dominated by the resurrection of Lazarus. This is a very rich narrative we hear each year in Lent and which sometimes we choose as a Gospel reading at the occasion of funerals.

Far from being repetitive this morning, I have to confess that this is a very important event in the life of our Lord as it reveals to us his true identity and our own fate in so far as we are related to Lazarus as friends and disciples of Jesus.

The context of the narrative is this strange situation where our Lord, informed of the sickness of Lazarus by his sisters, Martha and Mary, he deliberately delayed to go to Bethany. When he eventually decided to go there, Lazarus was already dead and buried for four days. However, against all expectation and in spite of the inconsolable grief of the two sisters, he raised Lazarus from the dead to the astonishment of many Jews therein present who believed in him.

I do not want to enter into details of this text by retelling the story. On the contrary I want to highlight the relevance of this narrative in regard to the life of our Lord, our own life of faith and our Lenten journey.

When our Lord came to Bethany and saw the two sisters crying, he wept with them. He did so because he identified himself with them and had compassion of them. This Lenten Season, we have to identify ourselves with the needy, the deprived and the poor. As long as we do not have compassion toward the suffering of our fellows we will never do anything good for them. True almsgiving starts with a sincere compassion for the suffering of our fellows. Where it lacks, there is no helping action.

Moreover, in weeping for Lazarus as a particular person, and with friends and family who loved him, our Lord wept for the condition of our human race and shared in the grief of humanity. Instead of being an isolated case, this is a permanent trait of the heart of our Lord. He shares with us all the moments of our lives, those of joy and those of sadness. He is moved to pity for the suffering of the world, as he showed at the multiplication of the bread and many healings he performed during his life.

As Martha was concerned about by the state of the dead after four days in the tomb, our Lord reassured her that he is “the resurrection and the life” and whoever believes in him will never die. Our Lord, indeed, has the power over life and death; he gives life to all who believe in him. This time of Lent, we have to renew our trust in The Lord.

The resurrection of Lazarus’ from the dead and his return to life anticipates our Lord’s victory over the grave we will be celebrating at Easter. It is the symbol of our Lord’s resurrection. It also teaches us that God can bring life where there is decay, hope where there is despair, and transformation where everything seems lost.

Once Lazarus was raised from the tomb, our Lord said: “Untie him and let him go.” The time of Lent is a wonderful moment of concrete actions of forgiveness toward our fellows, relatives, family members and all those with whom we have problems. Please untie them and let them go.

However, though Lazarus was raised from the dead, he eventually died. What it means is that our Lord has not come to prevent natural death to happen to us. He has not come to make this earthly life eternal, but rather to give us a hope of another world and an assurance of a life that will never end. We are on pilgrimage on earth; our true home is above. Our Lord has preceded us in the house of his Father and our Father to prepare for us a place. Then, he will come back to take us with him so that where he is we too might be.

Like any other people, we will experience physical death. However, because of our faith in Jesus, our death will be changed into resurrection. The internal power of God received in baptism will live out and lead us to live eternally in his presence. Then, what we have achieved inwardly with Christ will change our outer reality. As St Paul says, "If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the One who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also".

We are journeying not to the sunset, but to the sunrise of our life. When everything of what we have built on earth will stop, we know with the assurance of faith that our true life will start as Jesus will transform our mortal bodies into the glorious ones.

Then, it makes sense he can say: "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". The death and the resurrection of Lazarus have a character of example. What happened to him is what will happen to us who believe. For sure, we will die in our bodies, but in order to rise to new life. Our Lord will not abandon us in our tombs. He will raise us so that we share in his resurrection.

Let us take advantage of this period of Lent and untie ourselves from sins, addictions, past hurts, past hurts and un-forgiveness. Let us be free and live with our Lord.

Ezekiel 37: 12-14; Romans 8: 8-11; John 11: 1-45



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