

My Brothers and Sisters,

In last Sunday's Gospel, we witnessed Jesus healing the man born blind. In today's Gospel, we witness Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Both of these were extraordinary signs of Jesus' divinity. The man born blind proclaimed, "*It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind*" [Jn. 9:32]. In today's Gospel, Jesus did not raise someone who had just died. Lazarus had already been four days in the tomb.

Earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus said, "*I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly*" [John 10:10]. In today's Gospel, Jesus demonstrated the meaning what he said. In fact, we can see several layers of meaning in this Gospel.

On one level, Jesus revealed his divine-human love for Lazarus and for Martha and Mary. The humanness of his love was evident when he came to the tomb: he wept, and those present said, "*See how much he loved him.*" The divine depth of his love was even more evident when he raised his friend Lazarus from the dead and gave him back to his sisters, Martha and Mary. However, it must be remembered that as extraordinary as this miracle was, Jesus did not really resurrect Lazarus. Jesus gave Lazarus back the life he had before. Therefore, Lazarus was going to die again.

On another level, St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that by his resurrection, Jesus became a life-giving Spirit [1 Cor. 15:45]. In baptism, Jesus calls us to life in Himself. As Paul wrote to the Romans, if Christ is alive in us, we are alive because of righteousness. Even when we sin, Jesus' divine-human love calls us back to life as Jesus called Lazarus back to life.

On a third level, in today's Gospel, Jesus promised us eternal life: "*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 life Jesus promises is not for this life only but for eternity. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied this life: "*I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you about your land,*" foreshadowing God's eternal kingdom of life.

My brothers and sisters, today's Gospel not only proclaims Jesus as life giver. It also invites us to have faith in him. After Jesus promised Martha that he was resurrection and life, even before he raised Lazarus, he asked her "*Do you believe this?*" In other words, "do you believe that I am resurrection and life?" And she responded, "*Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.*" At the end of today's Gospel, we are told that many of the Jews began to believe in Jesus when they witnessed Lazarus raised from the dead. Jesus' question to Martha is his question to us today, "*Do you believe this?*" "Can you believe that I am resurrection and life?"

A short time later, Jesus would give his apostles his truly new commandment, "*Love one another, as I have loved you*" [Jn. 15:12; NJB]. Jesus' divine-human love for Lazarus gave him back his life. Love is life giving. In today's Gospel, we are called to bring to our relationships and to our world the same depth of feeling Jesus expressed at the death of his friend Lazarus. If we bring that depth of love to our relationships and our world, because the Spirit of Jesus lives in us, our love will also be life-giving. Human persons are only fully alive if they experience love. Like Jesus, we have the power to call people from death to life.