

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent - A  
Ezekiel 37:12-14;  
Romans 8:8-11;  
John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45  
Little Flower - 3/29/20

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."* 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."* In today's Gospel, Jesus demonstrates the meaning of his teaching. 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. Martha and Mary's words to Jesus when they informed him of Lazarus' illness were telling: *"Master, the one you love is ill."* John narrates that *"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus very much."* When Jesus was ready to return to Judea, he told his disciples, *"Our beloved Lazarus has fallen asleep."* When Jesus saw Mary and the others weeping, *"he was troubled in spirit, moved by the deepest emotions."* Jesus himself *"began to weep, which caused the Jews to remark, 'See how much he loved him!'"* Because Jesus is the Son of God made human, his human tears were also the tears of God.

As we continue to struggle with the coronavirus, I am going to suggest that the divine-human Jesus is weeping with us as he wept with Martha and Mary for Lazarus, which means that God is weeping with us. God is sad with us and for us, the same as he was when his beloved Son Jesus died on the cross.

On another level, St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that by his resurrection, Jesus became a life-giving Spirit. 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 promises 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? 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, "Do you believe this? Can you believe that I am resurrection and life? Can you believe that I am the Christ, the Son of the Living God?"

A short time later, Jesus would give his apostles his truly new commandment, *"Love one another as I have loved you."* 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 and the same love Jesus expressed at the death of Lazarus, his friend. 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.