

Fifth Sunday in Lent April 2, 2017

THEME: FULL LIFE.

INTRODUCTION (Background)

In John's Gospel today, this is the climax of Jesus' miracles but an expensive one because it cost Jesus His life. This miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was the "straw that broke the camel's back" for Jesus' opponents .

Because of this miracle, the people applauded Jesus on his way to Jerusalem in what we know as Palm Sunday. This miracle turned on the ignition that would lead to Jesus' arrest and death. Yet, with all of its power and drama this miracle carries a teaching of Jesus to you and me is central to Lent, to Easter and the Christian life. It must have been an awesome, magnificent moment to see Jesus facing the tomb and commanding "Lazarus come forth! Suddenly out of the shadows a bound body emerges. Jesus says, " Untie him and let him go free".

And Lazarus comes back to life and is set free. It is a splendid example of Jesus' power over life and death.

There are many Christians who readily believe that Jesus will give them eternal life when they die (and that is a truth of enormous power, peace and hope) but they live as if He has no power to give them new life now. They are like Martha saying "Lord I know that Lazarus will rise on the last day" not realizing that Jesus can raise him that very moment. He certainly has the power to give us life here and now. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead in such a public and dramatic way to show his power over all kinds of life and over all kinds of death.

There is not only biological death that signals **The end** our life here. There is also such a thing as SPIRITUAL DEATH. We can have biological life as our heart is beating, the amino acids are sparking, our lungs are breathing, our brain waves are active, enzymes are digesting, blood rushes in our veins, but spiritually we are. Our life may have lost purpose and direction. We have no

conscious relationship with God. Our spirit is deadened by sin, addictions, obsessions and fatal attractions.

We can be among the living dead. These are the people who live in tombs of their own making. From these tombs Jesus calls us to come forth .

When we place ourselves in the hands of Christ and his truth we start to emerge from the darkness. The bonds around us by which we are bound are loosened as grace enters our life. It is the moment when we open ourselves to the power of Christ. There are moments in all our lives when Jesus calls out to us.

From the tomb of separation from God, Jesus calls us in the sacrament of Baptism to "come forth" to union with God.

From the tomb of private spirituality Jesus calls us in the sacrament of Confirmation to "Come forth" to a public expression of Faith.

From the tomb of sin, Jesus calls us in the sacrament of Penance to “Come forth” to a renewed life of grace.

From the tomb of isolation, Jesus calls us in the sacrament of the Eucharist to “Come forth” to a life of communion with Him and with His Church.

From the tomb of anxiety in illness, Jesus calls us in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to come forth to join our illness to His redeeming work.

From the tomb of self-absorption Jesus calls us in the Sacrament of Marriage and Holy Orders to “Come forth” to sacrificial love.

Can you place yourself in the position of Lazarus, bound up in the darkness and spiritually lifeless? Then you can hear the words of Jesus to you in this Gospel, in every sacrament of every Mass, “Come forth”.

CONCLUSION

We know that Jesus can bring people to new life. We have heard their stories .The

history of the Church and of every parish is filled with empty tombs. Jesus can do this for you and me. The miracle of Lazarus coming to life is the promise of new spiritual life that Jesus can give you and me. Jesus gives us a new kind of life that conquers any kind of death.

The point of this Lazarus Gospel is that Jesus is indeed the Resurrection and the Life, our Resurrection and our Life! And maybe, just maybe, this year this Church will be our Bethany where we will come back to life. AMEN.

(ALL COMMENTS ARE WELCOME:

frjohn@strosesv.com)