

## HOMILY for 5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY of LENT - Year A

The story about Lazarus in this Sunday's Gospel reminds me of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A new pastor was asked to perform a funeral for a man that he had never met before. Unable to say anything about the man himself, he asked those present to share.

"Is there anyone here who can say something good about this man?" the pastor asked. There was no response.

"Well, is there anyone here who can say something halfway decent about this man?" the pastor asked again. There was nothing but silence from the crowd.

"Is there anyone here who can say anything at all that is at least somewhat positive about this man?" the pastor implored.

Finally, an older gentleman stood up & said, "Well, he wasn't quite as bad as his father!"

Anyway, funeral is always difficult for us to deal with. We have to say goodbye to our loved ones; & we feel sad about being left behind. We wonder what else we could have done to make that relationship last a little longer. We would exhaust all the healing solutions & do everything in our power to keep that person with us a bit longer. For those loved ones mean a lot to us; & they would leave a big hole in our hearts if they are gone from our lives forever. If you have ever had a loved one who passed away, you would understand what I'm talking about. Evidently, Martha & Mary just lost their beloved brother to some illness; & they were sad & devastated. This Sunday's Gospel shares with us about their loss & sad emotion as following: "...Many Jewish people have come out to console Martha & Mary over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would never have died. Even now, I am sure that God will give you whatever you ask of him.'...The Jews who were in the house with Mary consoling her saw her go out & followed her... When Mary came to the place where Jesus was, seeing him, she fell at his feet & said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would never have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, & the Jewish folks who had accompanied her also weeping, he was troubled in spirit, moved by the deepest emotions."

As you can see, the death of Lazarus brought extreme sadness & total devastation to his two sisters & the whole town. For they no longer could see him & do anything with him. They would not be able to laugh & share some good time with him like they used to. They lost someone who is dear & important to them. They felt like their heart was ripped out of their chest & they had no more reasons to live for. The only one who could have saved their brother & give them strength to live was their best friend & Lord Jesus. That is why we have heard both sisters expressed their inmost feeling as following, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would never have died." They knew that Jesus had the power to heal their brother & keep him alive. Still, they believed that Jesus could heal their family by bringing him back to life. Jesus could not leave his friends in sadness & turmoil. He needed to heal them & bring Lazarus back to life. That was exactly what Jesus did. Lazarus was the first person who was able to experience the miracle of the resurrection. That miracle brought not Lazarus back to life but also healing to Martha & Mary. Hopefully, this miracle reminds us to call on the Lord in our sad & desperate time so that He can come to help us & free us from our problems. With Jesus by our side, we are not alone & being surrounded by darkness.

But, that is not all He would bring us. Today's readings remind us that the Lord is the author of life & can bring us life, even eternal life. In today's Gospel, Jesus told Martha about that as following, "I am the resurrection & the life: Whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life; & whoever is alive, & believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Martha was the first one who was blessed with this revelation. Today's revelation gave her a glimpse into what would be coming at Easter time. Hopefully, it will help us anticipate what would happen to Jesus after Good Friday. In fact, today's First Reading prophesizes & confirms the Easter miracle in this way, "Thus says the Lord God: O my people, I will open your graves & have you rise from them, & bring you back to the land of Israel. Then, you shall know that I am the Lord... I will put my spirit in you that you may live... I have promised, & I will do it, says the Lord." So, the Easter miracle could happen because God would open our graves & fill our body with God's spirit. That is how God could give us life & ultimately bring us eternal life.

My dear brothers & sisters, our earthly life is full of sadness & challenges, including death. The story of Lazarus reminds us the importance of calling on the Lord in times of trouble so that He can bring us comfort & healing. But, that story also reveals to us that He is the author of life & can bring us eternal life. Hopefully, we will figure out those secrets about Jesus & call on Him in challenging times like Martha & Mary did.