

Jesus Wept: The Raising of Lazarus (5th Sunday of Lent, Year A [Optional for B, C])

Ezekiel 37:12-14—Thus says the LORD: “I Will Open Your Graves”

1. Bodily Resurrection: “I will open your graves”
2. Power of the Holy Spirit: “I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live...”

Psalm 130—With the Lord there is Mercy and Redemption

1. Salvation from Sin and Death: “He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities”

Romans 8:8-11—the Spirit will Give Life to Your Mortal Bodies

1. Jesus *Bodily* Resurrection → Our *Bodily* Resurrection (not just immortality of the soul)

John 11:1-45—The Raising of Lazarus

1. The Illness of Lazarus: “not unto death” but “for the glory of God” (11:1-4)
2. Why does Jesus wait “two days” longer to go to Judea? (11:5-16)
 - a. *Because he “loved” Lazarus and his sister!*
 - b. For the sake of the disciples: so that they may “believe”
3. Martha (active) meets Jesus: (11:17-27)
 - a. She Misunderstands: “I know he will rise on the last day” (cf. Daniel 12:1-2)
 - b. Martha’s Confession of Faith: “You are the Christ, the Son of God...”
4. Mary (contemplative) meets Jesus: “Jesus wept” out of “love” (11:28-37)
5. Jewish Tradition: many believed the soul departed after three days; on 4th day corruption/decay fully set in (cf. Mishnah, *Yebamoth* 16:3).

The Church Fathers

St. John Chrysostom: Many are offended when they see any of those who are pleasing to God suffering anything terrible... Those who are offended by this do not know that those who are especially dear to God have it as their lot to endure such things, as we see in the case of Lazarus, who was also one of the friends of Christ but was also sick. (Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 62:1).

St. Peter Chrysologus: [F]or Christ it was more important to conquer death than to cure disease. He showed his love for his friend not by healing him but by calling him back from the grave. Instead of a remedy for his illness, he offered him the glory of rising from the dead. (Peter Chrysologus, *Sermon* 63:1-2)

St. Augustine: Why did Christ weep except to teach us to weep? (*Tractates on the Gospel of John* 49:19)

Andrew of Crete: Lazarus, Come out!... As a friend, I am calling you; as Lord I am commanding you...Come out! ...Let the stench of your body prove the resurrection. Let

the burial linen be undone so that they can recognize the one who was put in the tomb. Come out!... Come out of the tomb. Teach them how all creation will be enlivened in a moment when the trumpet's voice proclaims the resurrection of the dead. (Andrew of Crete, *Homily 8 on Lazarus*)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5th Sunday of Lent, Year A)

1. Even though we are in the year of Matthew's Gospel (Year A), the Church inserts the story of the Raising of Lazarus from John's Gospel into the 5th Sunday of Lent. She also gives priests the option of preaching on it *every year* during Lent. Why choose this passage as the last one before Palm Sunday and Holy Week?

2. How can Jesus stay two days longer and allow Lazarus to die because he "loves" him? What do you think of John Chrysostom's statement that Jesus allows those he loves in a special way to suffer? Can you think of examples of great saints who also experienced great suffering? What about your own personal suffering?

3. How does the raising of Lazarus point forward to our own resurrection on the last day? Take some time to meditate and prayerfully imagine what your own bodily resurrection will be like at the end of time. How does that expectation make you feel? Hopeful? Afraid?

For Further Study

1. CCC 988-1004: Excellent section in the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the relationship between the bodily resurrection of Christ and our own bodily resurrection at the end of time.
2. Joel C. Elowsky, *John 11-21*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament IVb. Downers Grove: IVP, 2007. Pp. 1-32. An amazing collection of quotations from the ancient Church Fathers on the raising of Lazarus.