

## FIFTH SUNDAY LENT [A]

*Ezekiel 37:12-14; Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45*

Jesus calls Lazarus *by name*. *By name* Lazarus is called by Jesus.

Lazarus is really dead and yet he has not lost his identity, for with death *life is changed, not ended*. Indeed, those who have died have a different mode of existence because they have changed *from mortal life to eternal life*.

God wants us to be saved. God wants to save us. Therefore, never lose heart; always desire and hope to reach this goal.

Never despair! It does not matter how far you have strayed from God. It does not matter how long you have wandered away from Him. God wants to save us, to give us life!

Lazarus was dead and decaying. By now he will smell, for this is the fourth day, so says Martha to Jesus. If you feel God's inspiration and follow it, you will receive the life you so deeply desire: *Lazarus, come out!*

Listen: God calls *you* by name. With an urgent voice and by an extraordinary grace God calls you by name to come out, to be free from whatever it is that binds you and prevents you from experiencing the very best version of yourself.

In order to free Lazarus from his sins, the Lord Jesus commands "unbind him and let him go."

Christian art long has been inspired by this command of Christ. In the catacombs we find over one hundred and fifty representations of the raising of Lazarus, symbolizing the gift of the life of grace. And in these representations, the gift of the life is given by God through the priest who, in effect, repeats these words to those people who confess their sins: come out, be unbound and go.

The details of Lazarus' burial bands and the cloth covering his face are similar to the resurrection story. In fact, the only other time the verb "tied" is used in John's Gospel is during the Passion when Jesus is bound and hauled off (John 18:24). A more literal translation of the end of the verse (44) is "untie him and *allow* him to go."

The "allow" him to go is the same verb that Jesus uses when He is going back to the Father. These details strongly suggest that everybody is in a tomb somewhere and needs to be unbound. Jesus is stating that each person needs to be unbound, and allowed to go, to make their way freed and liberated from whatever is preventing them from the fullness of life and love.

Jesus calls you by name to come out, to be unbound, allowing you to go free.

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