

Homily on the Fifth Sunday of Lent (29 March 2020)

*Proof begets knowledge and confirms Faith;
Faith does not rest on proof but precedes it .*

A) Importance of the "SIGN" - Raising of Lazarus from Death

In every liturgical season there is a progress in the presentation of themes. The last five Sundays of Lent, combined, give the picture of death and resurrection in faith and in life.

1) **The first two Sundays** depict Jesus' own death and Resurrection in daily life

a) Temptation/Desert/Rejection (First Sunday)

b) Transfiguration/ Mountain/ Beloved ness. (Second Sunday).

2) **Then we have three Sundays** with three scenarios of death and resurrection:

a) The Samaritan woman at the well (*sociological death to be the first missionary*) her Faith in Jesus her missionary approach to the people of her town. (3rd Sunday)

b) The Man Born Blind (*Physical and spiritual death to growth in Faith*) he recognizes Jesus, the man Jesus the prophet finally Jesus the Lord daring missionary to proclaim the healing and the Lord despite threats of ostracism)his Faith. (4th Sunday)

c) Lazarus – (*Physical death to actual revivification*) belovedness to Mary and Martha and to Jesus their Faith. (Fifth Sunday). Though this is the longest passage in all the four gospels and the last and sixth sign and greatest "sign" of seven, Jesus will perform, in the public appearance before His Passion and death

Next Sunday (6th) we see the moving from another "mount" (donkey) to "crucify him".

We see three incidents where Jesus brings back people to life:

a) The dead daughter of Jairus (*Mk 5: 22-43*)

b) The widow's son being taken to the place of burial (*Luke 7: 11-17*).

c) **Lazarus brought to life** (*John11: 1-45*)

B) Anecdotes:

1) *"Is that Jesus knocking?"* There was a nurse who, before listening to the heartbeats of children, would plug the stethoscope into their ears and let them listen to their own hearts. One day she tucked the stethoscope into the ears of a four-year-old. Then she placed the disk over his heart. *"Listen,"* she said, *"What do you suppose that is?"* Thump, thump, thump. He drew his eyebrows together in a puzzled line and looked up as if lost in the mystery of the strange tap-tap-tapping deep in his chest. Then his face broke out in a wondrous grin. *"Is that Jesus knocking?"* he asked. Well, maybe so. Maybe Jesus is knocking at the door of our heart this day. Maybe Jesus is ordering the door rolled away from our tomb. *"My dear..., come out!"*

2) *Look, he is moving!"* Have heard of a story of three buddies who are all killed in a car crash and they are immediately in Heaven going to orientation. They are all asked the question, *"When you are in your casket and friends and family are mourning you, what would you like to hear them say at your funeral?"* The first guy said, *"I would like to hear them say, 'He was a great doctor and a great family man.'"* The second guy said, *"I would love to hear them say, 'He was a wonderful husband, a great schoolteacher and made a huge difference in our children of tomorrow.'"* The last guy said, *"I would like to hear them say, 'Look, he is moving!"* Lazarus was moving, because Lazarus was once again alive.

3) *What a friend we have in Jesus*: One of the simplest and the most consoling hymns ever written by Joseph Scriven in 1857. *'What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry, everything to God in prayer.* He was a Christian missionary working in Canada, when he heard that his mother was seriously ill in Ireland. He could not go there to be with her. Instead, he wrote a consoling letter enclosing it with the words of this hymn and mailed it to her. **He knew that in times of illness and loneliness, there is none who can give us a better company and comfort than Jesus. No greater friend than Jesus.**

C) Life Messages:

1) *"Roll away the stone, unbind him and let him go."* There are so many dark areas in our private lives. We need to **Move from a Culture of Death**: We live in a world that has been caught up in death for a long time. The acts of murder, abortion, euthanasia, execution, war, terrorist activities, and drunken, reckless driving. Some kill themselves through suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, smoking, overwork, stress, bad eating habits, and physical neglect. We watch calmly as others die from poverty, hunger and malnutrition, homelessness, unemployment, disease, lack of health coverage, child abuse, arms proliferation, discrimination, pollution, destruction of the environment, unsafe working conditions, and all the laws, policies, practices and attitudes which contribute to these conditions.

Subsequently we bury ourselves in the tombs of despair, in the tomb of selfishness, filled with negative feelings such as worry, fear, resentment, hatred, and guilt. Jesus asks us today to seek his help and that of the community around us to loosen those chains and come out of tombs of our own creation.

2) *Concern for others*: Jesus wept (*John 11:35; Shortest Verse in Bible*). This showed that he was not only the Son of God, but also the Son of Man, fully human, sharing our grief and our sorrow and comforting us with his declaration, *"Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted."* Mary's friends who grieved with her are the model of a supporting Church community. There is something therapeutic about having friends around us when we are grief-stricken. Hence, the Church must be a community offering compassion and consolation to one another. Often, in our busy and active culture, we don't have time to live deeply with our feelings and to share deep love or deep sorrow.

3) *"The right to life is basic and inalienable.* No one can assume the role of God to decide on the span of another's life. It is not anyone's privilege or credit to be born in a better place or rather someone else misfortune to be born in a bad place. **Citizenship is secondary. Being a human person living on this earth is the primary and the only privilege.** At this situation when the whole world is caught up in panic and fear and anxiety, due to Corona Virus, we are reminded of the great fact that we all belong to one place and one family. Geographical boundaries should not limit our sense of belongingness to one another.

D) Conclusion

Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life. He is the God who will put His spirit in us that we may live. Our Lenten celebration must serve to remind us that the Paschal Mystery represents a victory over death. Let us all be united in prayer for the whole world at this most difficult time of life. **Jesus help us... save us from Corona virus.... be with us... Amen**

Father Joseph Luka