

FAITH AND REASON

I am the resurrection and the life: Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning! The Gospel of this Fifth Sunday of Lent tells us of the resurrection of Lazarus. It is the culmination of the miraculous “signs” worked by Jesus: this act is too great, too clearly divine to be tolerated by the high priests, who, learning of the fact, decided to kill Jesus.

Lazarus had already been dead four days, before Jesus arrived; and what he said to the sisters Martha and Mary is engraved forever in the memory of the Christian community. Jesus speaks like this: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die”. With this word of the Lord, we believe that the life of whoever believes in Jesus and follows his Commandment after death will be transformed into new life, full and immortal. As Jesus is resurrected with his own body, though he does not return to an earthly life, so too will we be raised with our bodies which will have been transfigured into glorified bodies. He expects us with the Father, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, who raised him, he will also raise those who are united to him.

Before the sealed tomb of his friend Lazarus, Jesus “cried with a loud voice: ‘Lazarus, come out!’. And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth”. This cry is an imperative to all men, because we are all marked by death, all of us; it is the voice of the One who is master of life and wants that all we all may “have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). Christ is not resigned to the tombs that we have built for ourselves with our choice for evil and death, with our errors, without sins. He is not resigned to this! He invites us, almost orders us, to come out of the tomb in which our sins have buried us. He calls us insistently to come out of the darkness of that prison in which we are enclosed, content with a false, selfish and mediocre life. “Come out!”, he says to us, “Come out!”. It is an invitation to true freedom, to allow ourselves to be seized by these words of Jesus who repeats them to each one of us today. It is an invitation to let ourselves be freed from the “bandages”, from the bandages of pride. For pride makes of us slaves, slaves to ourselves, slaves to so many idols, so many things. Our resurrection begins here: when we decide to obey Jesus’ command by coming out into the light, into life; when the mask falls from our face we are frequently masked by sin, the mask must fall off! and we find again the courage of our original face, created in the image and likeness of God.

Jesus’ act of raising Lazarus shows the extent to which the power of God’s grace can go, and, thus, the extent of our conversion, our transformation. Listen carefully: there is no limit to the divine mercy offered to everyone! There is no limit to divine mercy which is offered to everyone! Remember this sentence. And we can all say it together: “there is no limit to divine mercy which is offered to all people!”. Let us say it together: “There is no limit to divine mercy which is offered to everyone!”. The Lord is always ready to remove the tombstone of our sins, which keeping us apart from him, the light of the living.... **Pope Francis**

From the Son's Death springs Life: The tolerance that admits God as it were as a private opinion but refuses him the public domain, the reality of the world and of our lives, is not tolerance but hypocrisy. But nowhere that the human being makes himself the one lord of the world and owner of himself can justice exist. There, it is only the desire for power and private interests that can prevail. Of course, one can chase the Son out of the vineyard and kill him, in order selfishly to taste the fruits of the earth alone. From the Son's death springs life, a new building is raised, a new vineyard. He who at Cana changed water into wine, has transformed his Blood into the wine of true love and thus transforms the wine into his Blood.

In the Upper Room Jesus anticipated his death and transformed it into the gift of himself as an act of radical love. His Blood is a gift, it is love, and consequently it is the true wine that the Creator was expecting. In this way, Jesus himself became the vine and this vine always bears good fruit: the presence of his love for us which is indestructible.

From his death springs life, because Jesus transformed it into a sacrificial gesture, an act of love, thereby profoundly changing it: love has overcome death. In the Holy Eucharist, from the Cross, he draws all to himself and makes us branches of the Vine that is Christ himself. If we abide in him, we will also bear fruit, and then from us will no longer come the vinegar of self-sufficiency, of dissatisfaction with God and his creation; but the good wine of joy in God and love of our neighbor... **Pope Benedict XVI**

Lent is like a long ‘retreat’ during which we can turn back into ourselves and listen to the voice of God, in order to defeat the temptations of the Evil One. It is a period of spiritual ‘combat’ which we must experience alongside Jesus, not with pride and presumption, but using the arms of faith: prayer, listening to the word of God and penance. In this way we will be able to celebrate Easter in truth, ready to renew the promises of our Baptism. **Pope Benedict XVI**

The Dignity of Labor: Sharing the daily work of the most common activities with Joseph and Mary, Jesus enlightens us about the fact that all work, no matter if it is humble or hidden, Jesus draws a person closer to the mystery of the Cross: it is a redemptive activity; it is a necessity and a liberation; it is a manifestation of the opportunity the human person has to subdue the earth. Work makes life more human when it helps to build a new, more perfect world. As such, work makes implicit the proclamation that humanity is journeying toward the new heavens and a new earth foretold by Christ's Resurrection. I want to remind the workers present here of all this - all those in this region who constantly strive to promote new and better living conditions: to those who work the land and those who work in small or large industries, to those who work in the trades, and those who practice ancient and traditional arts, to those who are searching for work, and to migrants, to those who have traditional work places, and those who use the most modern technologies.

I want to remind everyone that work, which is sometimes seen as a condemnation and servitude, has rather been assumed by Christ as a moment of redemption and the proclamation of liberation. It is the path to personal sanctification and salvation. It is the constructive moment of fraternal solidarity. Every profession can thus be understood as a particular vocation that confers on human work a superior dignity and a transcendent value because of the spiritual union with Christ... **Pope John Paul II**

A Lenten Bible Verse For the Day

Sunday **Hosea 12:6** But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.

Monday **1 Peter 5:6** Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Tuesday **Matthew 6:33** But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Wednesday **Psalm 42:2** My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with
God?

Thursday

Galatians 5:5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

Friday **Micah 7:7** But as for me, I watch in hope for the Lord, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.

Saturday **Lamentations 3:25** The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him.

Lenten Prayer for Spiritual Renewal: God, heavenly Father, look upon me and hear my prayer during this holy Season of Lent. By the good works You inspire, help me to discipline my body and to be renewed in spirit.

Without You I can do nothing. By Your Spirit help me to know what is right and to be eager in doing Your will. Teach me to find new life through penance. Keep me from sin and help me live by Your commandment of love. God of love, bring me back to You. Send Your Spirit to make me strong in faith and active in good works. May my acts of penance bring me Your forgiveness, open my heart to Your love, and prepare me for the coming feast of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Lord, during this Lenten Season, nourish me with Your Word of life and make me one with You in love and prayer.

Fill my heart with Your love and keep me faithful to the Gospel of Christ. Give me the grace to rise above my human weakness. Give me new life by Your Sacraments, especially the Mass. Father, our source of life, I reach out with joy to grasp Your hand; let me walk more readily in Your ways. Guide me in Your gentle mercy, for left to myself I cannot do Your Will.

Father of love, source of all blessings, help me to pass from my old life of sin to the new life of grace. Prepare me for the glory of Your Kingdom. I ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. **Amen**

As Lent is the time for greater love, listen to Jesus' thirst...'Repent and believe' Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor. He knows your weakness. He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you... **St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta**

In His Will is Our Peace

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