

5<sup>th</sup> Sun. Lent 2026

This Friday will be the last fish fry of Lent, stop by the school gym between 5 and 7pm if you can make it. And this coming Saturday, March 28, we're having the annual cemetery clean-up. Please help if you can so we can keep our cemetery looking nice. Cleanup will start at 8am but you can come at any point in the morning.

+ As we move through Lent our Sunday Gospel passages have come from John recently and they've presented us with the great signs worked by Jesus. There's seven signs in the Gospel of John, they're miracles but they're called signs because they point to Jesus' divinity and the seven sacraments that He established. And these miracles get more and more impressive than the last. The raising of Lazarus is the 6<sup>th</sup> miracle and the 7<sup>th</sup> will be Jesus' Resurrection. The Church wants us to keep our eyes on the prize as we finish out the season of Lent...to be mindful of what we're moving towards and the great hope it offers.

Last Sunday the theme was rejoicing at the light that Christ provides. Today's theme is hope...the readings offer us hope for the present moment, whatever our situation maybe, and hope for our eternal future. When Jesus finally arrives in Bethany Mary comes to him weeping, and the people with her were also crying. Notice how Our Lord reacts. John says, "he became perturbed and deeply troubled." Perturbed is the English word for the Greek word, *embrimaomai*...which means to snort with anger.

What was the anger felt by our Lord, it's hard to say for sure; but the best answer would seem to be that he is angry at death and what sin has done to us. It was by sin that suffering and death entered our world. It's almost as though Jesus is on the front lines of the battle field and has a focused anger towards Satan and what he has done. Jesus personifies what Ezekiel proclaimed, "As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live." To consider Jesus' anger at our mortality...to know that he is upset that we suffer and struggle...well, that's consoling. And it

gives us real hope, because if God is frustrated with something, then of course He will remedy it. We know He can, and He will because He desires my good, my happiness.

That truth, that certainty of faith, is how we make sense of the first part of today's Gospel. Because when Jesus hears that his friend Lazarus is sick, he doesn't go immediately. Instead, John tells us, "So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was." Jesus didn't get stuck in traffic or forget about Lazarus...he intentionally waited, waited for Lazarus to die. How often do our problems go unresolved, even getting worse, despite having prayed to God? We can relate with today's Psalm, "Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord." The truth is, sometimes God's answer to our prayers is, wait...not yet.

It's hard to wrestle with that answer but as Jesus tells his disciples, "I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe." God wants to create space for faith and hope to grow in us, otherwise we would lack those virtues that cause us to turn wholeheartedly to Him. And if Jesus would have simply cured Lazarus when he was sick versus waiting and raising him from the dead, the joy and delight in found in God would have been much less. If God wills that we endure trials and tribulations beyond our first coming to Him, it is so that our joy maybe greater in the end.

But we can't just wait around, giving up on our prayers...God doesn't want us to just bide our time. When Jesus prays to the Father before raising Lazarus, it's not because He lacked the power to do so Himself...his prayer was meant for our instruction. He shows us that in our necessities we should have recourse to God. Just because God doesn't immediately release us from struggles or fix our problem situations, doesn't mean He isn't attentive to our needs. When his future Apostles first met him, Jesus told them, 'come and see'...inviting them into His light. That phrase was used by the people in today's passage, but inversely. When Jesus asked where

have you laid him, they responded, ‘come and see.’ They invited our Lord into the darkness of sin and death...and he goes. By our prayers we summon Christ into our pitiful condition, and he comes so that He may lead us out of it.

God’s timing might be confusing and initially disappointing to us, but He does respond. Jesus going to Lazarus gives us that hope and the faith that He sometimes waits so that we can receive blessings greater than our first petitions. And by raising Lazarus he sets our sights on what should be our ultimate hope and desire, perfect and eternal life with Him. In two weeks’ time we will celebrate that gift when we see Christ battle and conquer death.