

## Fifth Sunday of Lent

My beloved brothers and sisters, we are now entering the final stretch of our Lenten journey, our spiritual audit of our lives with regard to our relationship with God, with our families and with our neighbors. The Gospel for today, is God's definitive Word to us in Jesus that He can bring good out of evil, even the evil of death!

Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days, even the family and friends of Jesus say to Him: "Lord, there will be a stench!"; nonetheless, Jesus demands: "Roll away the stone!" Notice, that the command is not to anyone in particular. Like the women who will come in the early hours of the morning, saying: "Who will roll away the stone for us; for it was a huge one!" This is the impossible stone of death, and only Jesus can roll it away. Immediately Jesus calls to Lazarus: "Come forth;" and Lazarus, wrapped in the winding sheets of death, comes forth from the tomb. Again, if you have ever seen the pictures of a mummy, you know that it would have been impossible for Lazarus to come out on his own. I have been in that empty tomb. It was narrow, and very steep, in fact, I could not go down into the lower area of the tomb, because I am too big a man! But Jesus is the God of the impossible! Lazarus appears at the opening, and once again, Jesus commands, (this time, the family and friends), "Unbind him, and let him go free!"

How the crowd must have reacted with wide-eyed disbelief, awe and wonder as Lazarus stepped out of the place of death and the stench of death! How they must have reacted with unrestrained joy and awe and celebration! How Lazarus himself must have reacted to the Divine Master and Lord, gazing into Jesus' eyes with wonder, awe and deepest love! How determined from that day forward, must Lazarus have been in a courageous loyalty.

We have been Christians so long, heard so many Gospels, so many sermons, received Holy Communion so often; and yet, in the midst of this, we often find it hard to believe, to rejoice in the Gospel, to celebrate the liberation that Jesus has won for us. It is as if we are still trapped in the tomb, like Lazarus, and like Martha and Mary, we say that we believe, and we do up to a point; but Jesus is asking us today to be utterly reckless in our belief in Him, staking it all upon Him and His

Truth! Jesus is asking us to follow, no longer our whims, but rather our full Trust in Him, so that we are no longer the victims of the darkness of the tomb that presently surrounds us, our society and our Church; but, the Victors with Jesus, in Jesus, and through Jesus! Jesus asks us to hope in Him, for He does not disappoint, even in the midst of the gloom and darkness- He has already rolled back the impossible stone, despite the wavering unbelief of the crowd and the two sisters. Jesus will bring Easter out of Good Friday, do you believe this? Do you believe it for your own life? Do you believe it even in the midst of the chaos now swirling around us? Jesus Christ is victor, and in Him, we too are victors! Amen, Amen, Amen!