Fifth Sunday of Lent (A)

Gospel text (*Jn* 11:1-45): Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill.

So the sisters sent word to him, saying, “Master, the one you love is ill.” When Jesus heard this he said, “This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in a day? If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” He said this, and then told them, “Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him.” So the disciples said to him, “Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved.” But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. So then Jesus said to them clearly, “Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him.” So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go to die with him.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise.” Martha said to him, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will

never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you." As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him. For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him. So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?"

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

"I am the resurrection"

Fr. Eduard CAMERON i Torra
(Sabadell, Barcelona, Spain)

Today the Church arrives at the threshold of Holy Week. In just a few days we will celebrate the most important event in history: Jesus, God made man, gives Himself over to the Passion in order to forgive the sins of all times. But this offering of His life does not end in death. With the Resurrection, Christ introduces us into divine life; He makes us share in personal communion with the Trinity. And because Jesus has risen, we are truly children of God. Today's Gospel introduces us to this through the resurrection of Lazarus.

Certainly, the situation in this passage is dramatic. Lazarus, the close friend of Jesus, falls ill and dies. And although the Lord is so deeply moved that "He wept" (Jn 11:35), He did not prevent his death. He who had already worked so many miracles does not save His great friend.

This paradox shows us how God acts: He is always at our side. Even when things go badly, Jesus weeps because He is not indifferent to our suffering, just as He wept for Lazarus.

Even more, suffering can unite us more closely to God. The death of Lazarus is not pleasing to Jesus, but He accepts it so that "the Son of God may be glorified through it" (Jn 11:4). And the same happens with us. God does not like to see us suffer, yet He makes use of our difficulties to give us His life. The Holy Father Leo XIV explains it when he says that "it is he who takes care of us. In times of darkness, even when all outward appearances suggest otherwise, God does not abandon us. Rather, it is precisely in these moments that we are invited more than ever to place our hope in the closeness of the Savior who never forsakes us."

It is true that there is a mysterious aspect in all this that we do not fully understand. It is helpful to look to the Mother of God. No mother desires or understands the suffering of her son. And yet, she remained at the foot of the Cross.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "But the confession you make is effected by God, when He cries with a loud voice, or in other words, calls you in abounding grace. Accordingly, when the dead man had come forth, still bound; confessing, yet guilty still; that his sins also might be taken away, the Lord said to His servants: 'Loose him, and let him go'. What does He mean by such words? What soever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Saint Augustine)

- "Christ is not resigned to the tombs that we have built for ourselves with our choice for evil and death, with our errors, with out sins. He invites us to come out of the tomb: 'Come out!', he says to us. It is an invitation to true freedom." (Francis)

- “The words bind and loose mean: whomever you exclude from your communion, will be excluded from communion with God; whomever you receive anew into your communion, God will welcome back into his. Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 1445)

Other comments

“I am the resurrection”

Fr. Johannes VILAR
(Köln, Germany)

Today, the Church presents us with a great miracle: Jesus raises a deceased man, who had been dead for several days.

The resurrection of Lazarus is similar to that of Christ, which we will commemorate soon. Jesus tells Martha that He is the resurrection and the life (cf. Jn 11:25). He asks all of us: "Do you believe this?" (Jn 11:26). Do we believe that in baptism God has given us a new life? Saint Paul says that we are a new creation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). This resurrection is the foundation of our hope, which is based not on a future, uncertain, and false utopia, but on a fact: "The Lord has truly been raised" (Lk 24:34).

Jesus commands, "Untie him and let him go" (Jn 11:44). Redemption has freed us from the chains of sin, which we all suffered from. Pope Leo the Great said: "Errors were overcome, powers subdued, and the world gained a new beginning. For if we suffer with Him, we will also glorified with Him (cf. Rom 8:17). This gain is not only prepared for those who, in the name of the Lord, are crushed by the godless. For all those who serve God and live in Him are crucified in Christ, and in Christ they will win the crown."

As Christians, we are called, even on this earth, to live this new supernatural life that makes us capable of bearing witness to our fate: always ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks us for a reason for our hope! (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). It is logical that in these days we try to follow Jesus the Teacher closely. Traditions such as the Way of the Cross, the meditation on the Mysteries of the Rosary, the texts of the Gospels… everything can and should be a help to us.

Our hope is also placed in Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ and our Mother, who is also an icon of hope: at the foot of the Cross, she waited against all hope and was associated with the work of her Son.