

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES

Reflection for

Fifth Sunday of Lent Year A, 29 March 2019

(May be used for Home Prayer Service)

Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

JESUS IS THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE

From the Third Sunday of Lent, the Evangelist John has been applying his gospel passages to enlighten us about the person of Jesus. First, in the passage of the Samaritan woman, we got to know that Jesus is the living water who satisfies our thirst for God. Second, in the passage of the man born blind, he teaches us that Jesus is the light of the world who dispels the darkness in our lives. Today, in the story of the raising of Lazarus to life, which is the last of the seven signs of Jesus in John, we learn that Jesus is the resurrection and the life in whom we have the fullness of life.

The summit of the life and mission of Jesus is best understood with reference to his resurrection from the dead. In today's gospel reading, he explicitly teaches us that he is the fullness of life. He has come that we may have life in full (Jn 10:10). Of course, we received our lives through him (Jn 1:3). However, the death of Lazarus is a prefiguration of the physical death which we all shall undergo. His raising from the dead by Jesus is a pointer to how Jesus shall summon each of us from our graves on the last day and restore us to eternal life that we may enjoy the beatific vision for all eternity.

As a matter of biblical fact, the belief in the resurrection of the dead on the last day is not foreign to the Jews. Thus, Martha's declaration (I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day) in vs 24 expresses this belief. In 2 Maccabees 7:9, one of the persecuted Jews declared, "... you may discharge us from this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, since we die for his laws, to live again for ever."

Likewise, the story of the raising of Lazarus is once again an assertion of the humanity of Jesus who feels our pain of loss. Message was sent to Jesus that his friend Lazarus whom he loves was ill. Jesus loves our loved ones who are ill, and he assures us that they will have life in him. We should not get weary of presenting our loved ones who are ill to Jesus since he loves them most dearly too.

Jesus wept

Jesus wept because his friend Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary whom he also loved, had died. With this human expression of emotion, Jesus identifies with all humans who have lost their loved ones and are in so much pain. Jesus went to the house of Martha and Mary to console them at the loss of their brother. Jesus also comes into every bereaved family at this difficult time to console all those who are bereaved. As Jesus consoles us in our bereavement, he as well lifts our eyes to heaven where our help comes from (Psalm 121:1-2). In raising Lazarus from the dead, he reassures us that our lives do not end here on earth and that we shall live again in the next life. The raising of Lazarus reunited him with his sisters. We are also given the assurance that we shall be reunited with our loved ones again in the next world, in the kingdom of our loving Father.

Unbind him, let him go free

After Jesus had given thanks to God, he commanded Lazarus to come out of his tomb. Lazarus came out of the tomb but his hands and feet were still bound. Jesus then commanded that he should be unbound and set free. Jesus sets humanity free from the bondage of pain and sorrow. As a result of certain experiences we have had in the past, we feel bound hands and feet. Unfortunately, this makes it difficult for us to move out of our past lives and to meet Jesus who lovingly sets us free from the bondage of our pasts. In order to experience the fullness of Jesus' love for us, he demands that we believe that he can do all he has promised that we may see the glory of God. Our resurrection on the last day is the path to seeing the glory of God. Let us run towards Jesus the author and finisher of faith (cf. Hebrews 12:2), believing that he, who is the resurrection and the life will restore our lives that we may see, not just the glimpse, but the fullness of his glory.