

March 18, 2018 – 5th Sunday in Lent – Year A (Scrutinies)

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead!

Today we celebrate the 5th Sunday in Lent.

Easter is only two weeks away.

So, how are we doing on our Lenten journeys, our "Take 40"?

Our Lenten journey is to lead us closer to God ... the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, closer to Jesus, closer to the Lord.

Is our relationship with God getting any better, closer?

Are we getting to be better friends?

What even draws us into a friendship?

What makes for a friend or a buddy?

Is it when someone is friendly? Helpful? Listens to us and our stories? Pays attention to us? Is there when we need them? Is it when we are impressed with their knowledge? Looks?

Friendliness? Caring?

How did you make a friend? Got introduced? Met by accident? In some group where you belonged? Met at work? You approached them?

God tried to help us make friends with him by sending Jesus, a human being like us, so that we might find Jesus attractive and want to become his friend.

Why would we find Jesus attractive?

1. Jesus has power, works miracles, gets our attention
2. Jesus sets such a good example by his lifestyle.
3. Jesus is such a great story teller, especially in the parables
4. Jesus is concerned about people; he is loving and caring for all people; and I am one of those people. You are one of those people. Jesus cares so much about me ... and you!

Lent is a time to get rid of any impediments that might put distance between our friend Jesus and me, might drag down our relationship. Maybe I am just too busy or maybe it's some habit of sin that just keeps Jesus and me at arm's-length instead of wanting to hug. Maybe Lent is a time to get closer to Jesus by learning more about him, by spending time thinking about him; time praying to him and listening to what he has to say to me.

Yes, there are the traditional ways to help the relationship: prayer, fasting and almsgiving to remind us about our valuable friendship with the Lord.

So, again, how is that friendship with Jesus going so far this Lent?

As we continue our Lenten journeys to get closer to the Lord we have today's Scripture readings to help us on that journey.

Today's Gospel might well help us find Jesus to be attractive because he is so powerful ... and caring ... and loving.

We get a sense of Jesus' power from the details of the story.

Lazarus had been dead for several days ... he may have already started to stink from his body starting to rot!

At the simple word of the Lord, "Lazarus, come out!" the corpse became alive again and came out of the tomb!

Wow! I've never seen nor heard of such an event even here 2000 years later where we have technology that they didn't have back then!

Can such a story, such an event, such a miracle attracts us more to the Lord; help move us to an even warmer friendship with Jesus?

Hope so!

If that story is so powerful, how about Jesus' own death and resurrection.

We know that Jesus died on the cross.

We see that crucifix all the time.

He had been tortured, had thorns smashed into his head, and had his hands and feet nailed to that cross.

Just to make sure he was really, really dead they took a spear and jammed it up into his side till blood and water poured out from his side.

Yes, he was really dead so they buried him on Friday evening.

Then, to the shock of everyone, he came out of that very same tomb three days later, Sunday morning, Easter Sunday.

No way, nowhere, at no time in all history has that been done by anyone else!!!

Has that risen Jesus had any impact on you, ever? How about now?

Yes, he was human, just like you and me!

But he was so much more!

Yes, we simply say he was the Son of God, not just any son, but

The Son of God, the amazing mixture of God and man!

Doesn't that story just make you shiver?

Actually, I would hope that it may warm us enough to say a few words directly to him!

In our First Reading we heard: "I will open your graves and have you rise from them."

In our Second Reading we heard: "The one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also."

If you would pick up your liturgy prayer cards let me point out the words that tie in with those first two Scripture readings.

For 2000 years Christians have been saying the words of the Apostles Creed.

Right at the very end we see:

"I believe ... in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.
Amen"

The Nicene Creed, from the year 325, elaborates a bit further.
 "...and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of
 the world to come. Amen"

So, it's not just Lazarus who gets raised from the dead!

So, it's not just Jesus who gets raised from the dead!

Yes, it is you, it is me, it is everybody!

Can we be ready for something as powerful as that for you and me?

Whatever our relationship with the Lord is looking like at this
 point in our lives, at this point in Lent 2018, these promises of a
 final resurrection, of life going on and on, can really grab us and
 hold us.

Maybe it is even a wake-up call that draws us into an intimate
 conversation with the Lord, a conversation that imagines a face-to-
 face talk with the Lord, the Lord who loves us so extremely much, who
 knows us even better than we know ourselves.

Can we even imagine our posture in such an encounter?

Will we sit? Kneel?

Will we stand and raise up our arms to embrace the Lord?

Will it be the most fantastic kiss of peace we have ever received?

Will we simply fall flat on our face, shaking our heads in the
 awesome presence of the Lord?

OK! We have two weeks more on our Lenten journey.

May they be days of growing closer, more intimate with the Lord.
 May they be days of us talking to the Lord ... and listening for his
 inspiration!

They are your days!

Blessings on each and every one of them!