

John 11:1-45 from March 2, 2021

This is a long Gospel today, 45 verses. When praying Lectio Divina, which is praying with the scriptures it's best to pick one word or phrase that really strikes deep inside of your soul. Take that word or phrase and really meditate on not only what it meant at the time it was said or written, but how it relates to your life here and now.

Often as a deacon, and we know that this is true for priests, we will be asked to pray for someone. It may be a loved one or, a close friend, or a co-worker. The one we're asked to pray for maybe sick or having an operation or may just need some type of physical healing. Martha and Mary had prayed that Jesus would come and heal their brother, but there can also be a spiritual aspect to our requests.

We're also asked to pray for someone who has either lost their faith completely or are in danger of falling into disbelief. In most cases we are asked to pray for a son or a daughter who no longer goes to Mass or if they are adult children their not baptizing their own children. Sadly, this is a common occurrence these days.

There is something that everyone here today should take away from this Gospel, and that there is always hope. We can't save souls, but Jesus can

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and he tells us this in the Gospel. He makes a promise to us in verses 25 and 26 when he was speaking to Martha;

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?”

Think about those words “everyone who lives and believes in me will never die”.

With these ten words Jesus is calling everyone to himself with a promise that everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Who but the Son of God could utter such words?

This should be part of our petition when we’re praying for our loved ones. Jesus you promised us that if we believe in you we will never die and if we truly believe he will hear our prayers.

One other phrase in the Gospel today got me thinking, why John says in this Gospel that Lazarus was “raised from the dead” and not resurrected from the dead. So as any faithful Catholic would do, I googled it.

Here is a quote I found from a **Pastor Matthew Norville, Sr.** He’s a non-denominational pastor but I think his description suits my purpose here.

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“When a dead person comes back to life they are said to be “raised from the dead.” But the person who was “raised from the dead,” will physically die again one day.

When a person is “resurrected,” they are also “raised from the dead.” But the difference between being “raised from the dead” and “resurrected,” is that when a person is “resurrected” they will never physically die again.

We know this is true because Jesus said in Luke 20:35–36,”

Is resurrection possible in this life while we are still living? Not for our bodies but for our souls. One can reasonably say that the raising of Lazarus as well as the awakening of Jairus’ daughter were two key opportunities for Jesus to show that the Father has given Jesus the power and authority over death. If Jesus can raise the dead he can rescue our souls from the clutches of evil but as St Paul tells us we must die to ourselves. Die to this life and awaken to the promises of Christ which is the continuation of life in heaven.

In the Old Testament the people were often described as having hardened hearts because they were too indifferent or too distracted by their own problems that they didn’t accept the miracles that God performed for them.

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If your heart is hard and your belief in God is either on the fence or completely lost Jesus is telling you that your soul is not lost it can be resurrected to eternal life if you choose to accept him for who he says he is. Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, Only a god whose voice can create from nothing can bring life back to a soul that has been hardened or dead no matter how long.

Martha and Mary had great faith. They believed in Jesus. They were certain that had Jesus arrived 5 days earlier that he would have saved the life of their beloved brother. For Martha there was a new truth learned that day. She believed in the resurrection on the last day but she didn't fully comprehend the power and authority given to Jesus by the Father. The power over life and death that only the true messiah could wield for all the people there to witness. Jesus did not raise Lazarus from the dead simply to reunite a family that he loved. He did so that Martha and the people there could witness the Glory of God.

Bishop Baron said words to this affect in a homily on this Gospel. I'm paraphrasing here; Listen to the command in the voice of Jesus as he cries out "Lazarus come out". There is power and authority in that voice, power enough to bring back Lazarus from the dead. Think of the origin of that power, God.

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The voice that said in the beginning of time “let there be light”. It’s the same voice. His is the voice of command not suggestion. It’s the creative voice of God. When God speaks he commands and things become. This is also why the words of Jesus through the mediation of the priest at Mass affect the Eucharistic change. The same voice that said “Lazarus come out” is the same voice that says ‘This is my body, this is my blood’. The priest in Persona Christy utters these words but it’s the voice of Jesus through the Holy Spirit who changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ.

Simply put because he is who he says he is, what Jesus says is”.

When our souls are resurrected from spiritual death our souls will never die again as long as we maintain our belief that true life is in the risen Lord.

Jesus said “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?”

Homily from Deacon Jim Thompson

Holy Mothers Collaborative