

Lent 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday (A)

22<sup>nd</sup> March 2026

‘Coming back to life with Lazarus raised from the dead’

Ezek 37: *I shall raise you from your graves, my people.*

Ps 129: *If you, O Lord, were to mark our guilt, who would survive?*

Rom 8: *He who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also.*

Jn 11: 1–45: the raising of Lazarus

With today’s passage from Jn 11 we have the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the three great texts from St John traditionally associated with our journey through Lent towards Easter and the Baptisms of new Christians. With the **Samaritan Woman** we were shown that Jesus leads us from *sin to faith*, her sins washed away in Jesus’s “living water.” With the **Man Born Blind** we were shown that Jesus *conquers blindness and gives new vision*, including ‘seeing the light’ in faith; again, Jesus uses water in that miraculous healing and symbolic enlightening. Today, then, we have the crowning glory of these three: *the power Jesus shows over life and death*, as He raises His friend **Lazarus** from the dead ... but in fact this is also about faith, isn’t it? — the faith of Martha, and the faith of those many witnesses, the “*many Jews [who] had come to Martha & Mary to console them concerning their brother.*” So, these three great texts Jn 4/9/11 build to a crescendo: the miracles grow in awesomeness, but the

focus remains one: *faith*. The Samaritan Woman, a non-Jew, needed help to renounce her life of sin and discover faith in Jesus; The Man Born Blind, in the Temple precincts, knew for sure that Jesus was a prophet, but needed help moving to the greater acknowledgment of “falling down and worshipping Him”; and the friends of Jesus at Bethany, already devoted to Him of course, also needed that great new insight that He is “*the Resurrection and the Life.*” The miracles are spectacular, but Jesus only performs them in order to bring about an increase in faith.

Once again, as in the previous weeks, we can enter very fully into this divine conversation — this profound encounter of Jesus with His friends, and their guests — and be led to examine our lives and consciences for Lent:

- (i) The first theme is simply that of **hospitality**. Do we care for others in a way that is welcoming, kind and inclusive? Martha, Mary & Lazarus are known to us in the Gospel precisely for opening their home so welcomingly to Jesus in His ministry. His was an exhausting Messianic itinerary, and the relaxing

domestic life that He was able to enjoy with this family of siblings clearly brought some human relief. We need to ask if we are caring for those around us; are we looking out for one another, in the simple matters of the day-to-day, e.g. inviting someone to share a meal, have a chat, esp. if we can see that they're not 100% happy. Are we keeping our eyes and hearts open to those around us?

- (ii) A **dutiful care for the sick** is especially important. Martha & Mary call on Jesus to come to their brother in his illness. We also need to be especially attentive, and patient, to those who are ill, and diligently to remember them in prayer. Are we regularly in touch with those who are sick; are we doing the most we can for them at a time of great anxiety? Is there anyone we are neglecting in this regard, given the precept of Jesus to His followers, that *corporal work of mercy*, to “visit the sick”? If they're Catholics, and somewhat seriously ill, at home or in hospital, it would be an act of great

charity to help them receive a visit from the local Parish Priest or Chaplain, and to receive the sacraments, including the beautiful Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. We should be active agents of their receiving the consolation of Jesus in the grace of His Holy Spirit at a time of great need, and maybe great anxiety.

- (iii) Then there's the attention we should give to the **bereaved**. It's not always easy to find words to comfort those who have lost someone. Maybe we feel inexperienced, out of our depth, or just too upset ourselves to have anything to offer. Yet, the bereaved are not first in need of complex therapies, just mostly in need of signs of kindness. *Jesus sighs with sorrow for His dead friend*, and opens His heart to the sisters who have lost their brother, and we should follow suit.
- (iv) **Care for the dead** is also a Christian demand, and above all we should never forget the deceased in our prayers. Let's ask ourselves if we are remembering

to pray for the dead and to offer Mass for them. No greater prayer can we offer for our deceased loved ones than the sacrifice of the Mass, that they may be released from purgatory and come to the eternal bliss of heaven; and it's good to pray also for those not remembered before God by anyone other than us! I am always willing to offer Mass for anyone you choose — in fact, I am often looking for Mass intentions for the daily Mass here at Newman House — you only need to ask, or e-mail, me, to find a mutually convenient date.

- (v) Finally: note how patiently Jesus teaches devout Martha, and brings her a new understanding of Christian salvation, and of Him personally as “*the Resurrection and Life*.” Are we as willing to be patient and **explain our faith**? The vast majority of humanity does not (yet) know Christ; and the vast majority of our friends possibly doesn't, either. Are we giving time to let others ask deep and searching questions about our faith, and to answer them

lovingly and knowledgeably? *We are that crucial link between them and Jesus Christ*, their one chance, maybe, to hear the Gospel. Or do we try and avoid conversations about our faith? How can we ever be missionary disciples if we are not willing to be generous and give time to others' questions about the faith. We do not need to be highly qualified to do that, but to speak of Jesus as we have come to know Him, personally.

So, that's 5 more aspects in our extended Lenten examination of life, as we seek to do God's will and have His forgiveness given us before Easter. If you've not yet been to Confession this Lent, then please give some time to deciding when that will be. Here at NH there are still several opportunities before Easter: Sun 12–12.45pm & 6–7pm; Mon 6–7pm; Fri 6.40–7.15pm. Jesus really calls us out of the tomb, in Confession, doesn't He! He raises us to a new life even within this earthly existence, when He forgives us, readying us for an eternal resurrection, saying, as to Lazarus, “*Unbind him/her, let him/her go free!*”