

Homily. 5th Sunday in Lent. Year. A. 25/26 March 2023.

There's usually some trigger that for good or for ill kicks us into action. As far as John's gospel is concerned it was Jesus raising of Lazarus from the dead that definitively set off the determination of the Pharisees and their supporters to see Jesus tried and executed as a criminal and blasphemer.

Now, you and I already know that tensions between Jesus and the Pharisees, scribes and Chief Priests of the Jerusalem Temple establishment had been simmering away for some time. John told us that the disciples were aware of this too when Jesus said that he wanted to go back South to Judaea and the Jerusalem area. They warned him that going to Bethany, just 3 kilometres from Jerusalem, was to put him and them right into the sights of his opponents. Acknowledging this fact Jesus nevertheless determined to make the journey, insisting that he was walking and acting in God's light and that while he had this light there was still God's work for him to do.

The work that Jesus did for the Bethany family, his friends and allies, was that of calling Lazarus out of death's grip, back to this life and world. This act opened up the opportunity for him to announce that he was not only the source of living water and light for our blindness, but also the font of life to all who believe in him, his teaching and his way. He knew that this would risk triggering his opponents, but God's truth is a truth which must be spoken and acted upon without fretting unduly over the cost.

Thomas the Twin was perceptive when he said to his fellow disciples; Let us also go and die with him, for this is exactly what unfolded. Jesus enemies plots and schemes were quickly debated, resolved and then set in motion. This would lead to a Thursday's last supper, to the garden of Gethsemane and to Friday's trials and the cross on Golgotha hill. Then, early on the Sunday morning, another empty tomb, this time that of Jesus, accompanied by visions, meetings and messages of his rising from the dead. His resurrection would differ markedly from that of Lazarus who would have to die again, for Jesus rose to glory in victory over every corruption and all forces and powers of death. He is the Chosen One who rounds off the circle, a circle of life that now embraces us and all people of good will who are seeking the spirit, light and life that God is offering.

In the words of the 1st reading, it is our graves and tombs that are being opened here, for God has promised this and God will do it. Or as St. Paul said; If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us then the One who raised Christ from the dead will give life to our own mortal bodies, too, through his Spirit living in us. This is our faith and our hope. Starting from next weekend we will be walking through, living and celebrating all of this in our Parish community. May God lead us with eager faith and charity towards this goal, our great Christian feast of life.