

*“Indeed for your faithful, Lord,
life is changed not ended,
and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust,
an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven.”
(Preface I from the Mass of Christian Burial)*



My Dear and Precious Friends,

The Gospel for this Fifth Sunday of Lent recounts the most powerful of all of our Lord's miracles, the raising of his friend Lazarus from the grave. As is the case for all of our Lord's miracles, they are worked because of His tremendous love for and the tremendous faith of those whose lives are touched by the power of the miracle that he performs. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are three of Jesus' closest friends. He is a frequent guest of their hospitality, giving them the gift of His love and receiving from them the gift of their love in return. He spends no small amount of time teaching them about the Kingdom of God in a deeply personal way. The tremendous faith of Martha and Mary is shown clearly as both of them in turn say to Him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Martha says to Jesus with total confidence, "Even now, I know that God will give to you whatever you ask." Jesus tries to tell Martha that her brother Lazarus will rise, He meaning in just a few minutes, but Martha interrupting Him with her powerful profession of faith, saying, "I know he will rise again! In the resurrection on the last day." It is then that Jesus gives to Martha and through Martha to all of us His promise, "I Am the Resurrection and the Life." And then He asks Martha and, just as surely as He asks her He asks each of us: "Do you believe this?" Once again, speaking with her tremendous faith, Martha answers without hesitation, "Yes Lord! I do believe! You are the Christ, the Son of God, the One who is coming into our world!" With a love so powerful that it brings our Lord Jesus to tears, with a faith so strong that Martha knew without any doubt Jesus could work this incredible miracle. Jesus calls Lazarus out of the grave. As powerful as that moment was, it would



be far surpassed in the days following when Lazarus' presence with and for our Lord would be the cause of so many to become believers. Lazarus would die, as would Martha and Mary, but they all died knowing that death would not be the end. That when their earthly bodies turned to dust, they would gain an everlasting dwelling place in haven. And so, as our observance of Lent nears its end and our celebration of Holy Week and Easter are fast approaching, our Lord asks each of us, "Do you believe?" My prayer for all of us is that, like Martha, we will be able to answer, "Yes Lord! I do believe! You are the Christ! You are the Son of God! You are the one who has come into our world to save us from death and give us the gift of eternal life!"

In conclusion, may I once again ask you all to complete the "Disciple Maker Index" survey as soon as you possibly can. Your investment of a few minutes of your time will help us shape the future of our parish family. The deadline for completing your survey is now just days away. Our pastors and parish leaders across the whole archdiocese need a spark of new life and inspiration to truly build a new reality for our new parishes. It is our hope that, seeing the results of the Disciple Maker Index surveys, they will be inspired to boldly let go of what has failed in the past to embrace a new reality filled with the joy of the Gospel, the love of God, and true faith and hope in the power of building our personal relationship with our Lord Jesus. How best to do this? We need you to tell us! As of this writing, our parish has only completed 85 surveys. We only have until March 31st to do our part to speak loudly and clearly to the future so that we can take our parishes off "life support" and instead breathe into them new life and new hope for a new future together. Thank you to those of you who have already completed the survey, and I beg those of you who have not yet done so to please take a few moments of your present to help shape our future for years and years to come!

In Awe and Wonder of the Power of God's Love and Divine Mercy, your friend and brother always,

Father Ralph

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