

Reflection from Father Alan

This Sunday, March 29, is the 5th Sunday of Lent and the gospel story is very familiar: John 11: 1 - 45, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. During this very difficult time with the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us are stressed and worried. When we turn to Sacred Scripture, especially today's gospel, our Lord always knows how to strengthen and affirm our faith.

Following are four reasons why I believe Jesus brought Lazarus 'back to life'.

First Reason: Jesus had a plan to glorify his Father and then to glorify himself as the Christ, the Anointed One, the certified Saviour. John 11, "The sisters (of Lazarus) sent a message to Jesus, Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard this he said. "This illness does not lead to death: rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Jesus prays to his Father before saying, "Lazarus come out." John 11: "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." This was a very clear message and proof that Jesus is the Christ, Anointed One and the Saviour.

Second Reason: Here is a clear teaching of 'new life' through Jesus, there is resurrection from the dead. The beautiful conversation between Martha and Mary, "When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him. "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes Lord, I

believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." This is a clear teaching and witness of life after death. Two weeks later Jesus himself dies in Calvary and is resurrected to new life.

Third Reason: "Unbind him, Let him go free." We all need to be forgiven, healed, loved and set free! Now in this time of the virus, this is so real, as well as, being set free into eternity. To quote Jesus from John's gospel: "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said, "Unbind him and let him go." These words are for you and me now, as Jesus forgives us, loves us and sets us free from our sins.

Finally **Reason Four:** Compassion! When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick and dying, the scripture said that, "Jesus began to weep." Later in the gospel story, as Jesus walked to the tomb of Lazarus, the gospel states that, "Jesus again greatly disturbed. Jesus loved Martha and Mary and was sad for them. Whenever Jesus saw human suffering, the lepers, the sick, the multitude of people hungry, He showed great compassion. Jesus will hear our pleas and prayers now as we struggle with the COVID-19 pandemic. Let us pray for one another.