

## **Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 22, 2026**

The Church places this account of the raising of Lazarus in today's liturgy certainly as a foreshadowing and anticipation of the Resurrection of Jesus, which we will celebrate in just two weeks' time. But it's not only a foreshadowing, because it really also points to the fact that we can participate in the Resurrection of Jesus. Lazarus is raised from the dead, so it shows that humanity has the opportunity to participate in Jesus' Resurrection from the dead. And furthermore, not just at the end of time, when Jesus returns in the world, we're not just pointing toward the Resurrection at the very end, the glorious, the glorious Resurrection at Jesus' last coming. The Church is teaching us that even now, we can experience this same grace of Resurrection. Just as Martha says, *"I know he'll rise on the last day."* Jesus corrects her a little bit, but he points to the reality of our participation in Resurrection and new life even today.

So, then the first question is, what constitutes death, or what is the tomb in our life? Or maybe another way of phrasing my question would be, what is there in our life that keeps us from really fully driving, really, fully living in the life of Christ, the joy of Christ, in friendship with God? What is there in our life that constitutes death? For some, it may be a daily battle with shame or guilt over some past sin. Maybe it's a past abortion or some other grave matter, something that a person has said to himself, 'I will never forgive myself for that.' Maybe it's a failed marriage or a failed relationship. Or even chronic pain, or for others, it might even be the daily battle with fear, anxiety, and worry. For others, maybe it's discouragement; discouragement about our own weaknesses, our own imperfections and sinfulness. Or for others, perhaps, it is a lack of a sense of freedom to just be who they are; that they don't accept themselves

as they are, so they try to be someone else thinking they have little different in order to be lovable. For others it might be grief, the heavy burden of grief. For others it may be anger. Just a daily boiling anger at what's going on in their whole life, or in the world around. All of these, all of these constitute a sort of death in our life, a tomb. Something that keeps us from really fully being alive in Christ. So that's the first question. What constitutes a death or the tomb in your own life?

The second question, then, is, where does this Resurrection come from? If there is Resurrection, there's new life that I can experience even from this tomb that is mine, where does it come from? The answer? That's an easy question. Jesus says, *"I am the Resurrection. I am the Resurrection and the life."* We need Jesus. We need Jesus to come to our tomb and call us out. He is the Resurrection and the light; he is our hope, even now, even now, not just at the end of my when we die, but even now even today. Why not today?

So, we know the problem. We know the answer. How do we receive Jesus the Resurrection and the life? How do we get him to come to our tomb and call our name and beckon us back into life? Well, for Lazarus it was the word that Jesus spoke. It wasn't until Lazarus from the tomb, heard Jesus' words: *"Lazarus come out!"* that he came back to life, and it was that the was the power of the divine Word, spoken to Lazarus that brought him Resurrection. So, listen to the word of Jesus, listening to the word of God is a way of receiving him as the Resurrection and the light. Of course, we also have Sacramental grace. We have the great gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation by which we receive the Jesus himself. He comes to us to forgive us and not only to forgive us, but to strengthen us so that we can turn away from sin more and more. We also, of course,

have the ability to receive Jesus in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. We receive the Resurrection and the life. Are we conscious of that when we receive Holy Communion, that we are receiving the Resurrection and the life? You are receiving newness, healing.

You know, we can really receive Jesus just about everywhere because he's constantly coming to us. Every day. He comes to us in the family members who live in our homes; he comes to us in our coworkers; he comes to us in the people we encounter out in public. He encounters us, we encounter him in the faces of the poor and those in need. In all those places, we can receive Jesus. The Resurrection and the light.

Some may say, "Well, I do all those things. I listen to the Word of God, I study the Bible, I go to the confession, I go to the communion, I try to see Jesus out there wherever I go, and I still feel kind of dead inside. I still have this reality. I don't live fully." Well, the Gospel also certainly shows us that things happen in God's time. There's that very difficult line where it says, "*Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, so when he heard he was ill he remained for two days in the place where he was.*" Well, that's kind of a head scratcher. You'd think if he really loved them, he would go immediately and raise Lazarus. But he had a bigger plan. And what he said is true. "*This illness is not to end in death.*" It led to through death. It led through death to Resurrection, and the same is true, for our own tomb, our own death. We are about to end in death, but we go through death into Resurrection. So, God's timing is God's timing. We have to allow for that.

But we also recognize that sometimes there's something in us that constitutes an obstacle to this flowing of God's grace in us. I

remember this one time I was trying to cut something, and it dawned on me eventually that I was holding the knife with the sharp side up. Or if you try to drive your car with the emergency brake on, you don't get very far. It's not that the car didn't work. It's not that this knife didn't work. "User error, user error." I've gotten that a lot.

So, Lent is a good time for us to work on removing those obstacles, setting aside the different things that get in the way of our receiving of this new life from Christ. It's a time not only of getting rid of the obstacles but also fostering a better and better disposition in our own hearts. Opening our hearts more and more to God. Increasing the love of God in our hearts. Resurrection is, for all of us not only the end, but even today.

So, what is the tomb you find yourself in? Who is there to bring Resurrection? Jesus is there. How can we receive him as the Resurrection and the light? Through his Word, through his Sacraments, through his coming to you each and every day. We ask then for the grace to receive Jesus, to receive the Resurrection, and new life.