

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, April 2, 2017**

## ***The Fifth Sunday of Lent***

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

### **EVEN MORE AMAZING**

According to the Gospels, how many people did Jesus raise from the dead?

The answer is three.

After reading this Sunday's Gospel (John 11:1-44), we can easily name one of the three – Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary.

But there were two other people. There was the daughter of Jairus, the synagogue official, and there was the son of the widow of Nain.

However, the raising of Lazarus, the key miracle performed by Jesus in the Gospel of John, is the most amazing and revealing of the three.

In the case of the daughter of Jairus, Jesus immediately responds when her distraught father pleads with him. "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live."

When Jesus arrives the 12-year-old girl has just died. Jesus takes the dead girl by the hand and raises her back to life. He then tells those present to keep things quiet. "He gave strict orders that no one should know this."

In the case of dead son of the widow of Nain, Jesus happens upon the man's funeral procession as it is leaving the city. Without being asked, and "moved with pity" for the widow who had lost her only son and source of support, Jesus acts. He brings life to the man, who according to Jewish burial practice, had most likely died earlier that very day.

In the case of Lazarus, things are different. When Jesus is informed that Lazarus is fatally ill, he does nothing. He waits two days until Lazarus is dead before beginning his trip to Bethany. When he arrives, Lazarus has already been entombed.

This is no recent death. John makes that very clear in the reading when he records the reaction of Martha to Jesus' order to open the tomb. "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days."

Jesus ignores the warning and challenges her lack of faith in him. "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?"

Jesus then orders the dead man to come out of the tomb. And he does! Lazarus is restored to life and the identity of Jesus is further revealed to all present. He is the one sent by God. He is "the resurrection and the life."

In raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus was not only showing love for his friends, compassion for those who were grieving, and his tenderness of heart, he was showing that a relationship with him could be life-giving. So life-giving in fact that it could not even be conquered by death.

Jesus blessed Lazarus with additional years of life, and he did the same for the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain. But what he offers us is even more amazing. Jesus offers us not additional years to grow old in this world, but unending years of life to remain forever young in the kingdom of heaven.

“I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

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