

**Homily for March 28, 2004  
5th Sunday of Lent A Cycle  
(3rd Scrutiny)**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**Ezekiel 37:12-14  
Romans 8:8-11  
John 11:1-45**

## *For followers of Jesus, death is never the last word.*

And now, the most dramatic promise Jesus makes to us through Lazarus—the conquering of death itself.

Here, in the presence of his close friends Martha and Mary, Jesus prefigures the mystery of his own resurrection by bringing Lazarus out of the tomb. And this is the miracle that most directly brings about his arrest, condemnation, and death.

In Saint John's gospel, Jesus' trajectory toward Jerusalem is clear and unflagging. From the first miracle at Cana, when he protested because it was not yet time, to this raising of Lazarus, it is clear that these miracles cost him deeply. Jesus' humanity both clashes with and magnifies his divinity here – he weeps at the loss of a friend, and at the loss of his own life to come, because he knows that the crowd is not made up just of friends and supporters, but those on the lookout to destroy him.

Three weeks ago, Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John. Two weeks ago, the woman at the well in Samaria caught a glimpse of God's glory in the stranger who promised her living water. Last week, a man who had been blind gained his sight. He could have gone on to a life as a traveling curiosity – whatever the first-century equivalent of talk shows might have been. Instead, he leaves everything behind and follows Jesus. He who had nothing now has everything. And, years later, when he told people that he had been blind and

then could see, they would have heard him with new ears already used to the idea of Jesus' resurrection. The mere act of receiving physical sight wouldn't have meant nearly as much to them as his recognition of the one who delivered it – and him.

And now life is returned. Jesus is conquering death at the same time he is setting the stage for our final redemption at his hands. So again this week we pray for those about to enter the church, for our young people who may be anticipating confirmation or first Eucharist, for all who may be timidly and hesitantly visiting our churches to see what we're about – that all may come to believe, rejoice, and grow eager to share the good news of all the many signs God gives us each and every day. God comes to us in the most primal of elements – water, dirt, spit – and through a corpse, to show us that this world is only the beginning, that God has created a world to come in which the reality we call death now is never the last word.

What is said of death is said also of sin and struggle – never the last word. Monday evening this week at 7:00 p.m. is our Lenten reconciliation service – extra confessors will be present with the opportunity to call by name the unloving choices and struggles and in turn to be called forth into life by the saving death and resurrection of Jesus.

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