

29 March 2020 - Fifth Sunday of Lent - Homily

By: Fr. Paul Magyar

John 11:1-45 The raising of Lazarus

The focus of today's gospel and the first reading from Ezekiel 37:12-14 is on the authority of God's word over death and the resurrection from the dead.

Lazarus is the brother of Martha and Mary. These three siblings are personal friends of Jesus whom he visits on more than one occasion documented throughout the gospels. Martha actually became the patron saint of cooks and housekeepers because she is portrayed in the gospels as always running around, multitasking and being busy at hospitality. Martha is from Judea but eventually died on the island of Cyprus and her body could have been buried all the way in Gaul, modern day France.

Martha's younger sister is Mary who is identified by Christ as the one who has chosen the better part when Jesus comes over. Mary usually sits at the Lord's feet and listens intently to his teachings. This is why Mary of Bethany is known as the "wished for child." She is different from Mary of Magdala or Mary with the seven sins.

Lazarus the brother. His name means "God is my help" because Christ literally helps him by raising him from the dead. Lazarus eventually passes away from an advanced age in Pompeii. Lazarus is from Bethany, which means "place of my pain and sorrow." Everyone who attends a funeral of a loved one is in the state of Bethany, in the state of pain and sorrow.

When Jesus arrives four days later after the death of Lazarus, Martha is surprised why Jesus waited for so long to come. Jesus waits until the fourth day because according to ancient Hebrew tradition it was believed that the soul of the person who recently died hovers around the body for the next three days, however it is on the fourth day that the soul ventures into the afterlife.

Only God himself has the power to retrieve a soul from the afterlife and bring it back into the present life. When Jesus arrives at the tomb of Lazarus he weeps because Jesus is present in every grieving, suffering state of our lives. Then with a loud

resounding voice Jesus commands Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Jesus uses his voice to bring life into Lazarus because God uses his voice and language to create the universe by speaking into the void of chaos and darkness from which habitable order and life is formed.

Praying for all of you

Fr. Paul Magyar