

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – A

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Anyone who has ever suffered the loss of a loved one can relate to Martha's reproach.

Jesus had his reasons for waiting. His time in this life is drawing short and he still has a lot to do to get across to his followers just what his mission is—not to be a healer only, but the one who is Lord even over life and death.

For him to make that clear, saving Lazarus in the nick of time will not suffice. Jesus must raise him from being dead as dead.

He accomplishes that in dramatic fashion. But not without cost. The experience affects him deeply. He grieves the trauma it has caused the sisters of Lazarus. He would have saved them from all that if there had been a way.

But such is this life. It's not built for immortality. Immortality belongs to the life of the world to come.

What we can forget when this life serves up its tragic moments is that God, as Jesus shows him to us, is not indifferent to our suffering. God grieves, too.

In today's Gospel Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. But it's not a resurrection. Lazarus is resuscitated and delivered back to his sisters in this world. He and his sisters and all involved will still have to face the death and opens the door to eternal life.

But they will do so knowing that the one who loves them is capable of accompanying them even on that journey as one who knows the way and who can deliver them to the promised destination.

Becoming a member of the baptized does not remove tragedy from our lives. It does, however, keep tragedy from having the last word.

That's what we profess when we make or renew our baptismal promises:

That, in the midst of our own tragedy, we will not despair and draw the conclusion that God either can't or doesn't want to save us.

The tears of Jesus tell otherwise.

Ultimately, this is a story about how God helps those in the house of the afflicted (Beth-any). And the story applies not only to Lazarus, but to his sisters Martha and Mary and, as it turns out, even some Jews from Jerusalem.

What happens during Lazarus' illness and death is a sign of divine life sustaining human life even through the disintegration of death.

It is a sign to bring us, his disciples, to belief.

Resurrection and life are what happens to those who are in union with Jesus. Anyone who is in union with him will not die spiritually even when the physical body dies.