

14. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“The Raising of Lazarus”

Jn 11:28-46

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying quietly, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; and he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Laz'arus, come out.” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him; but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

The time had come! Jesus had prepared His disciples - and also Martha - for what would happen with the resurrection of Lazarus. Indeed, the resurrection of a dead person goes far beyond human understanding, because it manifests a divine power that cannot be denied. Consider the resurrection of our Lord. His enemies had no choice but to bribe the guards not to testify to what had happened (Mt 28:11-15). The truth and its

consequences must be suppressed, whether by deception or by lies. This is what the high priests later tried to do in the case of Lazarus.

Today we see the Lord performing the miracle of the resurrection of a dead man in front of all those present. God wanted people to witness this sign, which Jesus testified to as the work of God, so that people would believe that He had sent Him.

Martha had not yet understood that her brother would actually rise in the flesh and warned Jesus that he had been in the tomb for four days and smelled very bad. But Jesus reminded her, *"Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"*

Then everyone present witnessed an incredible event: after the stone was rolled away, Lazarus came out of the tomb at the word of the Lord. Thus it became clear to all that Jesus had power not only over sickness, but even over death. The lame and the blind are healed; the dead Lazarus is raised.

It is so obvious that Jesus is acting by virtue of the authority God has given Him that there could only be one coherent response from the people who witnessed this event. In fact, it happened this way: *"Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him"*. Here we see the appropriate response to Jesus' miracle.

In the mission of taking the Gospel to all people, there has always been a place for these extraordinary and visible signs of grace, both as a testimony to God's goodness and as an authentication of His messengers. Jesus Himself sent His disciples and said to them: *"preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons."* (Mt 10:7-8).

"And after His resurrection, He assured them: these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." (...) And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it" (Mk 16:17-18, 20).

In this context it is important to keep in mind the hierarchy of values. Faith is based on the Word of God, and signs come to confirm it. In this way, faith spreads as God has willed and can unfold its full fruitfulness in those who accept it.

It is a great gift of God to mankind that He, in His infinite wisdom, uses every possible means to reach them and convince them that Jesus was sent by Him. The resurrection of Lazarus was a great sign. It was so powerful that it provoked in the hostile Jews the reaction that springs from the deep abyss of a twisted heart, under the influence of him who was "*a murderer from the beginning*" (Jn 8:44): they closed themselves completely to the truth, and this obstinacy led to the death of Jesus.