



20. March 2026
LENTEN SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Day 31:

“The raising of a dead man: a sign of God’s loving omnipotence”

After reflecting on the figure of St. Joseph as part of our Lenten journey, today we hear, both in the reading (1 Kings 17:17–24) and in the Gospel (John 11:1–45), the account of the resurrection of a dead person. In the first case, it concerns the prophet Elijah, who raises the son of the widow who had taken him in. This miracle fully convinced the widow that Elijah was a prophet: *“Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth”* (v. 24).

Thus, what must follow from such a miracle came to pass: faith in the work of God. In fact, one could say that the resurrection of a dead person is the visible proof that God is the master of life and death, and that only a man who belongs to Him can perform a miracle of such magnitude. Unfortunately, however, not everyone comes to this conclusion, as we must sadly note in various passages of the Gospel.

Today’s Gospel also tells us of the raising of a dead man. In this case, it is Lazarus, whose story is so familiar to us. Prior to today’s passage, the evangelist Saint John tells us that more and more people were coming to believe in Jesus (cf. John 10:42). His witness and the signs He performed were so powerful that those who had not closed their hearts to Him were convinced. And now the great event of Lazarus’s resurrection was added to this.

With this sign, the Lord would once again perform an extraordinary miracle that would make it clear that He was the Son of God, so that all who saw it should have recognized with absolute clarity that it could only be the work of God.

But before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He explained to His disciples that his illness would not lead to death, but was to serve the glory of God. It is important to understand that physical miracles are not only a manifestation of God’s loving compassion towards people in need, but are primarily intended to awaken faith in Jesus. Therefore, the glory of God is in the foreground, for by believing in His Son, people glorify Him, and thus the primary and essential purpose of Jesus’ coming into the world is achieved.

Think of the difficult situation in which the Lord found Himself. He was sent to men

to believe in Him, for this faith would save them. The heavenly Father credited Jesus by the signs and wonders He performed. Jesus Himself appealed to them as His witnesses: *“Even though you do not believe me, believe the works”* (John 10:38).

On receiving news of Lazarus’ illness, Jesus returned to Judea even though His life was in danger there. Although at times the Lord had withdrawn to escape specific attacks on His life, as when they wanted to stone Him in the previous chapter, He always carried out His mission without hesitation, even in the most difficult conditions. Subsequently, many disciples and missionaries acted like their Lord – just think of the apostle Paul and the countless persecutions he faced!

To get there requires a fundamental decision: nothing is more important than the mission entrusted by the Lord. It is in the foreground, so much so that everything else must be subjected to this hierarchy of values.

So Jesus set out with His disciples for the house of Lazarus and his sisters, rejoicing that their faith would be deepened by witnessing the extraordinary sign of Lazarus’ resurrection. Jesus’ desire is not only to awaken the faith of those who do not yet believe, but also to strengthen the faith of those who already follow Him, and so He says: *“For your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe.”*

This remains the Lord’s desire to this day. It is not just a matter of awakening faith, but of this faith leading people along a path that fills them more and more with the Spirit of God, so that the Lord can work more and more in them. Indeed, His work must continue. Also in these times, the proclamation together with the signs that accompany it must serve the glory of God. Even if we are unable to witness tangible signs in today’s evangelization (which undoubtedly continue to occur in abundance), the miracles of Jesus attested to in the Gospels can always strengthen our faith.

In fact, the resurrection of Lazarus bore great fruit, for the Gospel concludes by saying: *“Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him”* (v. 45).

On the other hand, we know the consequences this sign had on those who had hardened their hearts toward Jesus and were unwilling to be persuaded: *“From that day on they took counsel how to put him to death”* (Jn 11:53). In this we see that not even such an evident intervention by God, intended to awaken faith in people, always produces the expected results. This is a sad reality that repeats itself time and again both in the Holy Scriptures and in the lives of the saints. In extreme cases, undeniable miracles were even

suspected of being the work of Satan. One might ask: what more can the Lord do in such circumstances?

Our consolation is that the heavenly Father will never cease to court humanity with His love. He will also continue to work miracles to manifest this love, seeking to awaken faith in those who do not believe and to strengthen it in believers.

Although it is sometimes said that those who believe do not need miracles—and under this premise there is a tendency to belittle the signs that God continues to work to this very day—we must not be swayed by such views. Every miracle the Lord performs, even in the visible realm, is a manifestation of His love, and we must see it as such, welcome it with gratitude into our lives, and grow in faith.

As the flower of today's meditation, let us be grateful for God's signs and miracles and allow them to strengthen our faith.

Meditation on the Gospel of the Day: <https://en.elijamission.net/his-time-had-not-yet-come/>