

12. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN  
“Signs and Miracles”

Jn 10:40-42–11:1-16

*He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John at first baptized, and there he remained. And many came to him; and they said, “John did no sign, but everything that John said about this man was true.” And many believed in him there. Now a certain man was ill, Laz'arus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Laz'arus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Laz'arus. So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go into Judea again.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any one walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if any one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” Thus he spoke, and then he said to them, “Our friend Laz'arus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, “Laz'arus is dead; and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”*

More and more people were coming to Jesus and believing in Him. His opponents could no longer stop Him. The signs He performed were all too evident and His words were increasingly heard.

With the raising of Lazarus, 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 recognised 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 God, 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'* (Jn 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 evangelisation (which undoubtedly continue to occur in abundance), the miracles of Jesus attested to in the Gospels can always strengthen our faith.

This is the turning point for all mankind: if they accept God's gift of grace, then people's lives begin to be ordered according to God's will and lead them to fulfilment. If they do not accept it, then human life cannot unfold in its full dimension and, in the worst case, they fail in their goal for time and eternity.