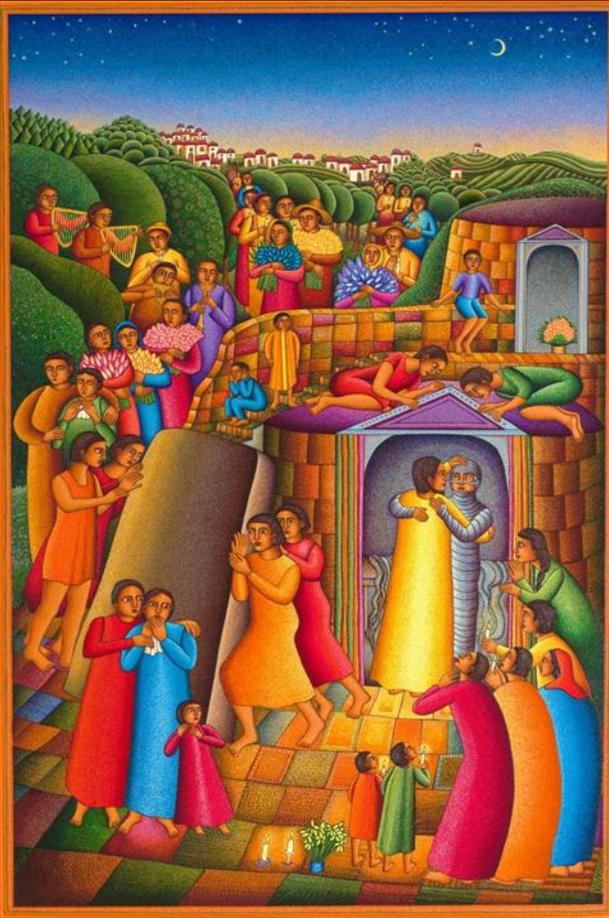


Blessed Trinity Catholic Community ~ Spirit of Christ Mission
The Fifth Sunday of Lent, THE THIRD SCRUTINY ~ March 22, 2026

Ezekiel 37:12-14; Psalm 130: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8; Romans 8:8-11; John 11: :1-44

Homily ~ Father Ed Hislop



The gospel today is not about Lazarus! It is about those who follow Jesus, and the people gathered—the friends, the families, the faith community, the strangers.

It is about what they will do or not do. It is about the giving of life and hope by those who have gathered, or the denial of life by those who expect a miracle from someone else. It is the stark truth that *“God is not found in neat and orderly places, distant from reality but is always at our side. God meets us where we are, on the often-rocky roads of life and death,”* despair and misery, hope and promise. *Pope Francis Homily Opening the Synod, Oct 10 2021*

The scene is powerful and profound yet simple and ordinary. It is a gathering of human beings, filled with questions and doubts, grieving loss and change, and wondering what the future will be, now that life, because of death, has been turned upside down. It is an encounter in the midst of life’s despair and hope, where feelings are raw and true, and words are strong and sincere. Jesus does not stand

aloof, but is in the middle of it all, completely present. He loves Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. *“He is not indifferent, his own feelings spoken, and his tears shared. He listens with his heart.”* Pope Francis homily Opening of Synod

In the heart of everyone there, the gnawing reality is both subtle and direct: Everything has changed. What am I to do? What are we to do? Who will we now be? How will we live?

We have all had those feelings when death haunts us, when life is changed or disaster strikes; when we are misunderstood, judged, uncared for, left behind, or kept out. It is felt even more when we discover that all those realities, once seemingly distant, are closer than we had realized, as Martha’s plaintive cry becomes our own:

“Lord, if only you had been here.” Perhaps we feel it today amid the horror of this war, as death is celebrated, destruction honored, and God’s name is scandalously evoked in defense of wanton violence and death, while the wail of pain seers through the universe. We are, or should, be *“perturbed and deeply troubled,”* as we become aware of the enormity of war, hatred, fear and lies. Our heart breaks as we witness needless and sinful violence in so many places. Like Jesus himself we are *“perturbed and deeply troubled,”* as we wonder, *“Lord, if only you had been here.”*

O yes, we are those people at that tomb. Some of us are family—Martha, and Mary. Some of us are the friends, the community; some of us are on the sidelines; some filled with the hope that out of this disaster something new and stronger will appear. Others are the cynics: “nothing will change, death has won! All is lost. There is no hope.” Some stay at home, refuse to see, or run away! Others are the critics who talk among themselves: *“Could not he who opened the eyes of that blind man have keep this one from dying?”*

Others, perhaps most of us are more like Martha, questioning, but engaged, grieving but courageous, fearful but trusting; honest but listening; doubting and at the same time believing!

Some like Mary, Martha's sister—stay at home, filled with grief and a deep longing: *"Lord, if only you had been here...!"* On the "rocky road of life and death," Jesus stands *"perturbed."* In the end it was Mary, having heard the call of Christ, *who finally left the safety of her home—her tomb—whose prayer "troubled" Jesus: "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died."* **LAZARUS, COME OUT!** The words of Jesus are striking and unexpected and as often as we have heard this story, have we really listened? The *dead* man came out. A *dead* man came out—bound in *"burial bands and his face wrapped in a cloth."*

Is he all those in our world today bound by the "burial bands" of death, longing for life: the victims of war, including innocent children, in Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Ukraine, Gaza, and far too many other places; the homeless, throughout our own land, the many who live without care or love, children without home running for their life, or the many in our own country, this very day "rounded up," and sent away to "camps" in *our* America. Is that dead man standing before us wrapped in *"burial bands,"* the too many missing young women in our native communities; is he those young girls kidnapped for sexual abuse by the rich and powerful of the world for the past several decades with little or no accountability or prosecution?

Is he all those wrapped in the *"burial bands"* of being despised, shunned, blamed, bound by racism, profiling and the victims of lies told over and over again? Is that bound man coming out of the tomb, the too many excluded and kept out even by the church?

All of these "bound up," stand there with the words of the psalmist on their lips: *"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord."* *"With the Lord there is mercy and the fullness of redemption."* Lazarus, is all of them, anyone, and everyone, crying from the depths, bearing the "stench" of being bound by the perpetrators of death, exclusion, lies, and hatred;

those who have run away and those who have finally come out of hiding. Jesus speaks, troubled and perturbed, to the assembly: to the Martha's and the Mary's, to families, friends, and strangers, to disciples and believers, to the hopeful and despairing, to the cynics and the critics: **Look at them,** *"do not remain barricaded in your certainties; Open your eyes; Listen. Let your ears be attentive!"*

Pope Francis

You roll back the stone, you unbind him, you make her come to life. You set those who are dead free. Endure the stench, wash, and clean them with the water of life, hope, compassion. Open your doors, *"take away the stone," "plant dreams, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds," not people, "weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope."* Pope Francis

"Do not involve the name of God in choices of death. God cannot be enlisted in darkness." Pope Leo

Will there be such a miracle? Do we have the will, the heart, the vision? Can the unbinding happen? OR is that too much trouble, too much to ask? Too costly? Too risky? Too "new?" Too much change?

Is the "stench" of suffering too much to endure? Or can we become *"perturbed and deeply troubled?"* So "perturbed and troubled," that we as a community, a Church, a people, citizens awaken, and shout from the heart, *"Take away the Stone,"* open the doors: COME OUT... and be seen.

It is no longer Lazarus, no longer the many who suffer, but now "they" are Christ, who has been and is here, *"meeting us on the rocky roads of life and death."* Christ, *"tied hand and foot with burial bands and his face wrapped in a cloth."*

Lord, you are here. You are Lazarus.
IT IS YOU WE UNTIE; YOU WE LET GO FREE.

THE STORY IS ABOUT US.

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