

HOMILY

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

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After World War II, on a troop ship with 1,500 Marines on their way home after serving in Japan, a chaplain was asked to lead a Bible study during the voyage. While studying the passage about the raising of Lazarus, a Marine came to the chaplain saying, "The story is about me!" The young man had gotten into a lot of trouble before going into the service. He could not stand the thought of facing his family. The story of Lazarus gave him hope and courage to face the consequences back home. Like Lazarus, he had been "turned loose, untied." Jesus rolled away the stone that kept him from life.

The story of Lazarus can be our story. In fact, the name *Lazarus* means *helpless!* We, too, can be turned loose, untied.

- ❖ Perhaps we're a person who is addicted, say, to a chemical substance or some addictive behavior that we just can't control.
- ❖ Perhaps we're a person who has lived an empty, meaningless life. Or perhaps, whose faith and prayer life seems so dead and dried up.
- ❖ Perhaps we're tired, hurting, at our wit's end.
- ❖ Perhaps we're a person who lacks confidence in our ability to cope as the harsh realities of life rush in.
- ❖ To each of these, Jesus calls our name. Lazarus, friend, come out! What good news for all of us.

Some of you will remember the story of a nurse who, before listening to the heart beats of children, would plug the stethoscope into their ears and let them listen to their own hearts. One day she tucked the stethoscope into the ears of a four-year-old boy. Then she placed the disk over his heart. “Listen,” she said. “What do you suppose that is?” Thump. Thump. Thump. The boy drew his eyebrows together in a puzzled line and looked up as if lost in the mystery of the strange tap-tap-tapping deep in his chest. Then his face broke out in a wondrous grin. “Is that Jesus knocking?”

Well, maybe so. Maybe Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart this day. Maybe Jesus is ordering the door rolled away from your tomb. In the midst of the darkest, emptiest of our days, Jesus says to us, “Come out! Be free! Untie yourselves! Live!” The story of the raising of Lazarus ends with these words: *“Now many of the Jews had come to Mary and seen what he had done and began to believe in him.”*

How about you? Have you really put your faith in him? Do you trust him? Are you willing to turn your life over to his guidance, his direction, his voice?

“Lazarus, come out!”

