

## St Joseph the Worker Richfield Springs, NY, April 9, 2011

---

♪ To Life, to life, L'chai-im! L'chai-im, L'chai-im to life!

Life has a way of confusing us, blessing and bruising us,

Drink L'chai-im To Life, to Life, l'chai-im!

L'chai-im! L'chai-im, L'chai-im to life!

A gift we seldom are wise enough ever to prize enough,

Drink L'chai-im ..... To Life! ♪

The story of Lazarus is about the central message of Christ:

"I have come that you might have life, and have it to the full."

It is about the life that begins before we die, and is not ended with death.

In a way every change is a kind of death - whether it is a change in health, like when Lazarus got sick, or a loss of a job or even the birth of a child. What has died is what we were before the change, yet there is always hope that a new life can begin after the change.

But sometimes I'm like Monk, in the TV series, when he says, "I don't mind change, I just don't want to be there when it happens." I suspect the apostles were like that too. How about you?

The story of Lazarus is important whether we face our own death, or the death of someone we love like Martha and Mary. It has something to teach us whenever we face illness, as Lazarus did, or any change. You know, after he was called out of his cave, Lazarus still had to face change. He did it by choosing to live as a disciple of Jesus - and put his life at risk, because this event set the plot to kill Jesus in motion, and that plan included killing Lazarus as well.

I remember the time I got a call from a close friend. Her son, Bjorn, had been killed in a car accident at the age of 16. I got to their home in Canandaigua as soon as I could, and grieved with the family, and the many teen aged friends of the young man who had died. When the memorial service was held, the church was packed. The Scriptures that promised resurrection and eternal life were read, of course, but I was moved to tell a story about how even creation proclaims the promise the Christ still offers.

### **Dragonfly story**

For weeks after the service, the story gave life to Bjorn's family and friends. His sister began to make dragonfly jewelry. His girl friend had a dragonfly tattooed on her ankle. And everything in the local stores that had anything to do with dragonflies was sold out!

When I remember that event and reflect on the death of my own mother in December 2009, I remember the pain of loss, but I also hear the deep truth of the teaching of Jesus, that even Death is a form of healing. My mother moved from a place of partial dementia and confinement to a wheelchair to a place of peace and life. She believed the words of St. Paul in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, "If the spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit dwelling in you." The way she would say it to me was, "I'm not afraid of death, it is the process of dying I don't like."

---

From God's point of view - and according to what we say we believe - death is one of the forms of healing. Lazarus is living proof of the truth of the prophesy of Ezekiel in the 1<sup>st</sup> reading, "I will open your graves and have you rise from them."

But It was **NOT** enough to take the stone away and come out of the tomb

Jesus **also** told them to, **"Untie him, and let him go free."**

It is not enough to 'come out of the tomb' at our Baptism to begin to share the New Risen Life of Jesus  
if we are still 'bound up' like Lazarus was

It is **ALSO** a reminder to all of us to look closely at those things we are

**wrapped up in** – those things we are **wrapped up in** that strengthen us - make us strong & encourage us

– those things we are **wrapped up in** that bind us and keep us from being Free

~ Free to **LOVE** & Free to **BE LOVED**

~ Free to **BE HEALED** & Free to **HEAL**

This Gospel story reminds us all of us disciples of Jesus need TWO things

my strengths that enable me to follow JESUS to love & live as He did

**1 Discernment** – to discover both

my weaknesses that keep me from living my Baptismal Call

**2 Encouragement & Help**– to be able to **become & stay** Free

What are you involved in that brings you to **Christ** or **Christ** to you?

What are you wrapped up in that keeps you from living fully the NEW Risen Life you received at your BAPTISM

– your 'calling forth' from the tomb – your 'unwrapping' from those things that bind you and prevent you from 'being free'?

The word of God today calls us to untie each other and set each other free,  
as Lazarus was in today's Gospel.

The EUCHARIST today gives us the pattern and the power to repent, to rise and to serve.

To KNEEL with Mary of Bethany, admitting our need to be healed and forgiven.

To STAND with Lazarus, receiving the power to live the life of the Spirit

To WALK with Martha, to meet Jesus in communion

and to go out to serve the Lord in our families and our world.

The Eucharist we celebrate gives us the vision to see death and change as forms of healing, and the power to receive and pass on the life that is stronger than death itself.

♪ "And he will raise you up on eagles' wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,  
Make you to shine like the sun and hold you in the palm of his hand." ♪