



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

5th Sunday of Lent Year A

Restored to life

Readings: *Ezekiel 37: 12-14, Ps 129, Romans 8: 8-11, John 11: 1-45*

We read the wonderful account of Jesus' raising of Lazarus in today's Gospel. As a young man this act seemed unreservedly wonderful. Here was a dead man to whom Jesus had given back his life. Being a friend of Jesus we might assume that Lazarus was about the same age and therefore, in this remarkable resuscitation, he has had restored to him the years that death had otherwise stolen. It was a miracle. It was a gift. It was a sign of Christ's power over life and death.

As an older man the miracle seems more nuanced. At this stage of the game I am not sure that, having gone through the process of dying – not something in my pastoral experience to look forward to – would one really long to be brought back with the certain knowledge of having to go through it all again. I have often joked with my nearest and dearest that the last thing I want is a doctor jumping all over me at the last minute when I am set sail for the eternal harbour on a tide of prayer and a little morphine.

On a pastoral note, as Catholics we need to note that we are not at liberty to resist normal measures that would restore us to health – we do not want to be put down like the family dog. But we are at liberty to issue a 'Do not resuscitate' instruction to avoid extraordinary measures which will not restore to health but only prolong the agony and mitigate against a holy

death. It is also important for us to boldly seek the last rites and Apostolic Pardon before the analgesics make this unrealistic.

As Catholic Christians we set out to live for Christ and, when our time comes, to die in Him. We know that our life is in His gift and so is our life beyond this mortal frame. Thus we rejoice at the raising of Lazarus because it gives him back the years death had otherwise stolen. But we rejoice beyond that because, in this sign (as with the raising of the son of the widow of Nain) we are vouched safe a revelation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ over death and life. This power to re-summon the spirit of Lazarus and reanimate his mortal lodging is but a temporal foretaste of what the power of God will shortly achieve in the Resurrection of Jesus Himself.

For the Resurrection life is not a resuscitation or reanimation with a sell by date. What sin and death has stolen from us, Christ has restored by His sacrifice on the Cross. It is the transfiguration of mortality into immortality. It is the transformation of our time locked existence into an eternal reality. It is the transubstantiation of our humanity into His divinity. This is the miracle of the Third Day. Beyond this death is no more.