

- When overseas I had said I wouldn't return home for Dad's funeral; there would be no point. But when I received news that Dad was very ill and dying I was on the first flight home. My cool reasoning gave way to love and I just had to be at my Dad's side. I made it with just a few hours to spare!
- Lazarus was one of Jesus' closest and most beloved friends.
 - "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus" Rare words in the Gospel!
 - *Jesus wept* at Lazarus' tomb. More rare words!
 - And the people remarked, '*See how much he loved him.*'
- Yet when Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill and dying '*he stayed where he was for two more days*' before heading on foot for Judea and Lazarus. By the time they got there Lazarus had been dead four days. Jesus knew exactly what he was doing; he had a plan.
- Raising a dead man to life is a great miracle by anybody's standard but two factors increase the great drama of this miracle.
 1. Lazarus had already been dead four days. ("Lord, by now he will smell") So this miracle was a real statement: "I'm really raising a dead person whose body has started rotting, not just someone in a deep sleep or a coma".
 2. Lazarus and his sisters were highly regarded, so a large number of people had gathered, giving Jesus a great number of witnesses to this most extraordinary miracle in which Jesus demonstrates the power to give life; he demonstrates that **He** is the resurrection and the life!
- We are accustomed to hearing these words of Jesus at funerals and so applying them to life after our own physical death so time down the track. In the Gospel Martha too pushes the words of Jesus into the future when she says to Jesus "I know that Lazarus will rise in the resurrection on the last day".
- But in their conversation Jesus is trying to bring Martha to realize that if she believes she will see the Glory of God here and now, not just in some distant future. You see the raising of Lazarus is not only about what God offers us after we die but what God is offering us today while we live.
- Through baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, and Reconciliation, God is offering us new life today. We don't have to wait until death to begin eternal life. The eternal life of grace, of sharing or participating in God's divine life can start now. Our eternity begins today, not just when we die! If we want to be raised up again after death we have to be raised up again and again by Jesus while we still live.
- When Lazarus emerged from the tomb Jesus said "*Unbind him, let him go free.*" We don't have to wait until we are dead to be set free by Jesus. For as St Augustine told his congregation sixteen hundred years ago it isn't just physical death that should concern us but also spiritual death which is sin. I'll finish with Augustine said, but you'll have to listen carefully:

- “For everyone who sins dies. Yet everyone fears the death of the body, though few fear the death of the soul. Everyone takes care that the death of the body should not occur, bound though it is to come someday... It is a source of trouble to prevent the being who will die from dying, yet no one troubles to prevent the one who will live forever from sinning ... If only we could persuade everyone, and ourselves with them, to be as much in love with the life that endures as we are with the life that is running away.” ([Evangelium Iohannis Tractus 49](#))