Fifth Sunday of Lent A 2023

In this gospel we see Jesus at his most human and his most divine. He loved Lazarus and his sisters and wept with grief at Lazarus’ death. But he brought Lazarus back from death in a clear pre-echo of his own rising from the dead. God is fully at work here.

Before Jesus’ trail and death - in what we call the ‘agony in the garden’ - Our Lord again shows his deeply human nature - he is full of fear and dread of what is to come. He knows, as God, that this is his essential role. He is able to say ‘thy will be done’.

We take great heart from this as we battle our way through life. If we are honest we look at ourselves and know our weaknesses. I pity the person who believes they haven’t got any. But we also have our grace filled selves. We don’t simply give way to every selfish feeling; to every emotion. When we meet serious challenges - like the sickness and death of someone very dear - we go through grief, with all its complex twists and turns, and at the same, in faith, see them at peace - beyond the cares and struggles they have known in life.

We are getting close to our long meditation on suffering, death and new life - we are close to Holy Week. We don’t think of it as a simply a way of looking back. But rather all our own experience; the experiences of the world; are caught up in this most profound drama. In going through the days with Our Lord we grow; we are consoled; our faith is given a transfusion - and we experience new hope and joy.

Lazarus stumbled clumsily from his tomb. Jesus said:- ‘Unbind him, let him go free’. He came to undo everything that binds us. He came to give us true freedom.