

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This weekend's Gospel speaks so powerfully of how God works in our lives, even today. This story of the raising of Lazarus is so human, yet so divine! At the beginning of the Gospel, Lazarus is sick, and Mary and Martha send word to Jesus. It is interesting to note that they don't say, "Lazarus is ill," but rather, "**the one you love is ill**" (John 11:3). This sets up the relationship. Lazarus is not just some man who happens to be sick – like the Royal Official's son in John 4 – but a dear friend. This should show how surprising it is that Jesus doesn't immediately cure Lazarus from a distance – as He did with the Royal Official's son – or go immediately to Bethany to heal him. Rather, He waits.

Waiting. This is difficult for us. We don't even have to wait to find out information – just pull out your phone and "Google" it! And what happens should we have no signal, or the internet was slow?! We get frustrated having to wait. Everything is at our fingertips. I think back to my childhood – there were several ketchup commercials that capitalized on having to wait for the ketchup to come out of the glass bottle, claiming, "The best things come to those who wait." Everything is given to us now almost instantly! No one wants to wait! Yet, sometimes God makes us wait. Sometimes we're not ready for the incredible gift He wants to give us, so we must prepare and wait. The helplessness of waiting can teach us how powerless we are over our lives, and teach us dependence on God. Martha and Mary had to wait for Jesus to act (as did Lazarus), but the wait was well worth it.

When Jesus does finally go to Bethany, Lazarus has already died – and has been dead for four days. Both Martha and Mary cry out to Jesus in pain, "**Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died**" (John 11:21, 32). What faith they had, knowing the healing power of Jesus! Yet, they are still in pain from the loss of Lazarus.

When all hope seems lost, we might rant or cry out to God as well. We might rage at God! We might cry out, "WHERE WERE YOU, GOD?! I NEEDED YOU AND YOU ABANDONED ME!" Martha and Mary know this pain well. The truth is that Jesus did not abandon them, nor does He ever abandon us. Let me say that again: GOD *NEVER* ABANDONS US! In our limited humanity, we never see the whole picture. God does. He has an *incredible* plan for us. His timing is *always perfect*! Even in the midst of our pain, may we be like Martha who wondered where Jesus was, but still believed, "**Even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you**" (John 11:22). God is trustworthy. Even when humanly speaking there is no hope, God has a plan, an unbreakable plan, a perfect plan of how to take care of us! Even in our pain, if we place all our trust in Him, we will find hope, peace, joy.

John 11:35 is the shortest verse in the Bible: "**And Jesus wept.**" Jesus knows full well that He will raise Lazarus from the dead, yet He shares our pain, our grief. He saw the pain of His friends, and it touched His heart. The word "compassion" means to be with someone in his or her suffering. God is not distant. God does not watch us "from a distance." God is not indifferent to our suffering. Even though He sees the triumph of His love in our lives, He still feels our pain – He weeps when we weep, He laughs with our joy. He is compassionate. He IS COMPASSION! More than any mother who is in bitter anguish as her child is languishing in illness, does Jesus feel and experience our suffering and pain. God is not far off... He is right here with us!

Finally, Jesus cries out to Lazarus, "**Lazarus, come out!**" (John 11:43). And this is the amazing thing – the dead man cannot resist the call of Jesus, and he actually *rises from the dead*! And God has an amazing plan for you and for me, *beyond anything we could ever imagine*! When we feel like there is no hope, when we think there is no way out of our conundrum, *God has a way*! He still does miracles.

I pray that the Gospel will inspire each of us to trust that God is NOT far from us, but close; that even in the delays of God, when He tells us to wait, that He has a plan, *a great plan*, for our good, our well-being, our flourishing, our joy! He does, after all, desire to give us life, and life in abundance (cf. John 10:10).