

Theme: **IS DEATH THE END TO EVERYTHING?**
FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT!

22 March 2026

Nothing in life is more certain than death. Yet, many people ask, “After death, what?” why the question in the first place? Perhaps because death is the end of our plans and aspirations in life. Perhaps because of the thought of permanent separation from our loved ones. Perhaps because of the uncertainty about what lies beyond. Or perhaps because we cannot accept the incontrovertible signs of our mortality, namely, sickness, pain and deterioration – physically, emotionally, and psychologically.

We can learn many lessons about death from the gospel reading (Jn 11:1-45) which talks about the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Jesus did this for two reasons:

First, **BECAUSE LAZARUS AND HIS TWO SISTERS, MARY AND MARTHA, WERE JESUS’ FRIENDS.** He stayed with them when he was in Bethany. One day, when Lazarus was sick, the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Master, the one you love is ill.” This was not only a simple message; it was also a prayer. For between true friends, no instructions are needed. All that is needed is for one to let the other know his/her situation so he can respond to it the best way he can. Neither does friendship impose; it trusts. That is how it was between Jesus and Lazarus and his sisters. That is how it should be between us and God.

Second, **JESUS, AFTER BEING INFORMED OF LAZARUS’ ILLNESS, DELAYED HIS COMING.** This delay was essential to the story, *so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.* Thus, though Lazarus was already in the tomb for four days when Jesus arrived, this did not mean that it was too late for him to make himself the life of Lazarus. In the same manner, when we make Martha’s message and prayer to Jesus ours, namely, **“Master, the one you love is ill,”** we should leave it up to him to determine what to do and when to do it. For when he acts, it is only for one reason – **“for the glory of God.”** Thus, the need for proper disposition and patience on our part.

Let us now focus on the conversation that transpired between Martha and Jesus and draw lessons from them.

On his arrival, Martha met Jesus, saying, **“Lord, if you had been her, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.”** Do we not detect in these words a friend’s hint to the other to do something for her brother? Jesus’ response, **“Your brother will rise.”** To which Martha replied, **“I know he will rise, in the resurrection at the last day.”**

Martha’s message gave Jesus the opening to reveal for the first time that he was the **resurrection and the life.** When Martha expressed her belief in the resurrection earlier, she did not say anything new nor startling. Ordinary Jews believed in the resurrection at the end of time. What was startling was Jesus’ new revelation, **“I am the resurrection and the life.”** And he meant here and now. He proved this by raising Lazarus from the dead there and then.

What is the significance of this gospel from John 11:1-45 to the OCIA candidates?

The raising of Lazarus is one of the most important Gospel passages in OCIA because it proclaimed on the Fifth Sunday of Lent during the Third Scrutiny and it directly prepares catechumens for Baptism and the new life they will receive at Easter.

This Gospel reveals Jesus as: ***“I am the resurrection and life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies will live.”*** The connection to OCIA are very deep because from death to life Lazarus represents humanity bound by sin and death. He cannot free himself; Christ must call him out. **In OCIA, catechumens recognize that only Jesus can bring them from spiritual death to new life through Baptism.** Baptism is not only washing but it is dying and rising with Christ. Just as Lazarus comes out of the tomb, the newly baptized rise from the waters as a new creation.

Jesus says, ***“Lazarus, come out and untie him and let him go”***, In OCIA, the catechumen hears Christ calling them personally into the Church and into life with Him. It reflects the freeing power of the sacraments which reveals the freedom from sin, freedom from fear and freedom to live as a disciple.

It also reflects the role of the Church in helping new Christians grow after Baptism, to grow in faith just like Martha’s journey when she said, ***“Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ.”*** Thus, *OCIA is about moving from partial faith to full profession of faith before Baptism. Indeed, the gospel proclaims this truth that those who enter Baptism are not merely joining a community, but they are being raised to new life by Christ Himself.*

Furthermore, aside from the physical death, believing in the resurrection also means to “die” to ourselves and live for Jesus, that is, to ground ourselves in Jesus. A bride or groom must “die” to her/his independence to form a family. A mother must “die” to give life to her baby. A father must “die” to his many personal interests so he can work hard and give life to his family. A student must “die” to his easy-go-lucky ways so he can do well in his studies.

In the same manner, we must “die” to our envy, anger and hatred so we can live in peace and harmony with God and one another. Finally, we must “die” to ourselves by sharing ourselves to others – our time, talent and treasure – especially to those in need so they can rise from their many “deaths” – their poverty, privations, sufferings, and hopelessness.

As followers of Jesus, we believe in the resurrection of the dead; that death is not the end of everything. Rather, it is just a passage into eternal life and that the life hereafter is only a continuation of this life. But this life after death could be ours only one condition, namely, to believe in Jesus, ***“Whoever believes in me even if he dies, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”***

Jesus as our Life and Resurrection gives meaning to our pains, trials and even death. When we accept all these in faith and love, then our many other deaths acquire a special meaning. For when we center our life in Jesus, when we begin to die to our selfishness and live for others, then Jesus will be glorified in us. This is what it means to rise in glory with him even now.

DURING THIS SEASON OF LENT, THE CHURCH INVITES US TO DIE TO OURSELVES – THE ONLY WAY FOR JESUS TO BECOME OUR LIFE AND RESURRECTION. THEN OUR RESURRECTION FROM OUR MANY OTHER DEATHS WILL NOT COME AS A SURPRISE WHEN EASTER COMES.