



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS

ANGELUS

Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 26 March 2023

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear brothers and sisters, *buongiorno!*

Today, the fifth Sunday of Lent, the Gospel presents to us the resurrection of Lazarus (cf. *Jn* 11:1-45). It is the last of Jesus' miracles narrated before Easter: the resurrection of his friend Lazarus. Jesus knows that his dear friend Lazarus is about to die. He sets out on his journey, but arrives at his house four days after the burial, when by then all hope had been lost. His presence, however, rekindles a little confidence in the hearts of the sisters Martha and Mary (cf. vv. 22, 27). They cling to this light, to this small hope, despite their suffering. Jesus invites them to have faith and asks for the tomb to be opened. He then prays to the Father and shouts to Lazarus: "Come out!" (v. 43). And the latter comes back to life and comes out. This is the miracle, just like that, simple.

The message is clear: *Jesus gives life* even when it seems that all hope has gone. It happens, at times, to feel hopeless — this has happened to us all — or to meet people who have given up hope; embittered by bad experiences, the wounded heart cannot hope. Because of a painful loss, an illness, a bitter disappointment, a wrong or a betrayal suffered, a grave error committed... they have given up hope. At times we hear some say that "there is nothing more to be done!", and they close the door to all hope. They are moments when life seems to be a sealed tomb: everything is dark, and we can see only sorrow and despair around us. Today's miracle tells us that it is not like that, this is not the end, that in these moments we are not alone. On the contrary, it is precisely in these moments that He comes *closer than ever to restore life to us*. Jesus weeps: the Gospel tells us that Jesus wept in front of Lazarus' tomb, and today Jesus weeps with us, as he

was able to weep for Lazarus: the Gospel repeats twice that he is moved (cf. vv. 33, 38), emphasizing that he burst into tears (cf. v. 35). And at the same time Jesus invites us not to stop believing and hoping, not to let ourselves be crushed by the negative feelings that take away our tears. He approaches our tombs and says to us, as then: “Take away the stone” (v. 39). In these moments, it is as though we have a stone inside, and the only one capable of removing it is Jesus, with his words: “Take away the stone”.

Jesus says this to us too. *Take away the stone* : the pain, the mistakes, even the failures. Do not hide them inside you, in a dark, lonely, closed room. *Take away the stone* : draw out everything that is inside. “Ah, but I am ashamed”. Throw it to me with confidence, says the Lord; I will not be scandalized. Throw it to me without fear because I am with you, I care about you and I want you to start living again. And, as he did with Lazarus, he repeats to each one of us: *Come out!* Rise again, get back on the path, regain your confidence! How many times, in life, did we find ourselves like this, in this situation of not having the strength to get up again. And Jesus: “Go, go on! I am with you”. I will take you by the hand, says Jesus, like when you were a child learning to take your first steps. Dear brother, dear sister, take off the bandages that bind you (cf. v. 45); please, do not give in to the pessimism that depresses, do not give in to the fear that isolates, do not give in to the discouragement caused by the memory of bad experiences, do not give in to the fear that paralyzes. Jesus tells us, “I want you to be free. I want you alive, I will not abandon you and I am with you! Everything is dark, but I am with you! Do not let yourself be imprisoned by pain, do not let hope die. Brother, sister, come back to life!”. “And how can I do this?”. “Take my hand”, and he takes us by the hand. Let yourself be pulled out — and he is capable of doing it — in these bad moments that happen to us all.

Dear brothers and sisters, this passage in chapter 11 of the Gospel of John which does a great deal of good to read, is a hymn to life, and it is proclaimed when Easter is near. Perhaps we too in this moment carry in our heart some burden or some suffering that seems to crush us; something bad, some old sin we cannot bring out, some youthful mistake, you never know. These bad things need to come out. And Jesus says, “Come out!”. So, it is the moment to take away the stone and to go out towards Jesus, who is close. Can we open our hearts to him and entrust our worries to him? Do we do it? Are we able to open the tomb of problems — are we capable — and look over the threshold, towards his light, or are we afraid of this? And in turn, as small mirrors of God’s love, do we manage to illuminate the surroundings in which we live with words and gestures of life? Do we bear witness to the hope and joy of Jesus — we, sinners, all of us? And also, I would like to say some words to confessors: dear brothers, do not forget that you too are sinners, and you are in the confessional not to torture but to forgive, and to forgive *everything*, just as the Lord forgives *everything*. May Mary, Mother of Hope, renew in us the joy of not feeling alone and the call to bring light into the darkness that surrounds us.

After the Angelus, the Pope continued:

Dear brothers and sisters, yesterday, the Solemnity of the Annunciation, we renewed the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, in the certainty that only the conversion of hearts can open the way that leads to peace. Let us continue to pray for the tormented people of Ukraine.

And let us also remain close to the earthquake victims of Turkey and Syria. The proceeds of the special collection taking place today in all parishes throughout Italy are destined for them. Let us also pray for the people of the state of Mississippi, struck by a devastating tornado.

I greet you all, people of Rome and pilgrims from many countries, in particular those from Madrid and Pamplona, and the Mexicans; as well as the Peruvians, renewing the prayer for reconciliation and peace in Peru. We must pray for Peru, which is suffering a great deal.

I greet the faithful of Zollino, Rieti, Azzano Mella and Capriano del Colle, Bellizzi, Crotone and Castelnovo Monti with Unitalsi; and I greet the Confirmation candidates from Pavia, Melendugno, Cavaion Veronese and Sega, Settignano and Prato; the young people of Ganzanigo, Acilia and Longi; and the Association *Amici del Crocifisso* of the Marches.

I address a special greeting to the delegation of the Italian Air Force, which is celebrating the centenary of its founding. I wish you well on this anniversary, and I encourage you always to work to build justice and peace.

I pray for you all; and do this for me. And I wish you all a happy Sunday. Enjoy your lunch.
Arrivederci!