

‘Lazarus, come out!’

Lazarus of Bethany, brother of Martha and Mary, a very close friend of Jesus, lay dead, sealed inside a small cave. His body was tightly wrapped in cloth. Inside the narrow tomb it was cold, silent and black.

Suddenly Lazarus opened his eyes and the ceiling of the cave was sprayed with light. He heard the sounds of the men’s voices as they moved the heavy boulder away from the mouth of the tomb. Hot, dry wind rushed into the cave and Lazarus filled his lungs with the delicious air. With the air came more light forming shadows and textures on the side walls of the cave.

Jesus’ voice engulfed Lazarus. The thrilling sound swept over and around him like foaming ocean surf. His friend’s words poured into Lazarus with majestic cadence and clarity. Each syllable seemed to take a century to hear but it burst upon him in only an instant. Just to hear again was exquisite. But these were words from Jesus. These were words of marvelous invitation... *“Lazarus, come out!”*

With tingling energy coursing through his veins, Lazarus responded, rolling onto his hands and knees. He crawled toward the brilliance of the day awaiting him outside the cave. At the entrance Lazarus stood erect, blinking in the bright sunlight.

Jesus waited, arms outstretched, ready to embrace him. Lazarus staggered a step closer and saw the fresh, wet tears welling up in Jesus’ eyes.

“Untie him and let him go free,” Jesus directed. Martha and Mary moved quickly to their re-born brother and stripped the wrappings from him. Lazarus caressed the heads of his busy sisters as they pulled the wrappings away.

The crowd which had gathered stood frozen in place. Like silent statues they watched with mouths agape. They were the true witnesses of the last and the greatest of Jesus’ miracles. Even so, they could not believe what they were seeing. Their minds were already trying to find some way



of explaining it.

Jesus and Lazarus embraced. What words they might have spoken would have never made it past their brimming emotions, barely contained within the fragile wall of their silence.



During this Fifth Week of Lent, we listen above the roar of the world, and hear Jesus call us by name. He, invites us to ‘come out’ of our routines and be with him. But, like Lazarus, we are wrapped in what binds us, entombed in the world around us and powerless to rise up. But then Jesus’ voice sounds within us, it awakens the power we need to rise. With Jesus’ grace coursing through us, we can step into the sunlight and bask in his presence. We too shall rise.