



*You shall know that I am the Lord, when I open
your graves and make you come up out of them, my people! (Ezekiel 37:13)*

March 24, 2026

Hello Everyone —

The account of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead possesses the power to wonderfully captivate our imagination on this year's Lenten pilgrimage. When Jesus heard the news of his friend's sickness, he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." The Lord's words are reminiscent of those he spoke a couple of weeks ago to the woman of Samaria when he told her: "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." And again, a week ago, when the disciples wanted to place blame for the cause of the blindness of the man lacking sight from birth, Jesus replied, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him."

By means of the gospel story of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, death can serve as a keen metaphor for our reflection. For individuals as well as for communities, there are lots of ways of being dead — lots of ways of being entombed. The inevitable reality of physical death is not an issue for the evangelist John. Notice how Lazarus is first called from his grave and only then unbound and set free ("Untie him and let him go."). Lazarus' coming back to life involves much more than just breathing again and finding that his heart is beating once more and his flesh is no longer rotting. His new life and liberation from the grave invite Martha and Mary and indeed the entire community to have faith in Jesus, who is "the resurrection and the life."

People and communities are still being called from their "graves." Unbinding — unloosing — setting free — are among the most pronounced of Jesus' activities. The Lord does it — and continues to do it — in so

many wonderful and profound ways. I already referenced the Samaritan woman and the man blind from birth. Were these individuals not called from their grave-confined existences? Were they not set free through their encounter with the Christ, the Son of Man?

How do these life-restoring interventions of God in real lives provide a challenge to you and to me? To our families? To our communities of faith and worship? To our war-stained world?

For the opera aficionados among us, there is an outside chance that you may recall a world-renowned opera star from the 1940s/50s by the name of Ernestine Schumann-Heink. Early in her career, Ernestine's marriage dissolved. Sick, hungry, discouraged, and reluctant to rear her children in what she experienced as the very worst of worlds, she contemplated suicide. Not only did she contemplate it, but she planned it and was on her way to carry it out in a most disturbing manner. Schumann-Heink packed up her little ones on a bitterly cold night and headed for the railroad tracks on the outskirts of Vienna. She knew the schedule of the train. Cowering on the tracks with her children, she waited for the express train to come roaring down the tracks as an angel of death and bring her ultimate relief. At one point, her little daughter implored, "Mama, it's so cold here. I love you. Let's go home." The tiny voice of her child pleading from the darkness brought Schumann-Heink to her senses. She abandoned her desperate plan, decided to make another attempt at life, and within a few years, was acclaimed as one of the greatest singers of the operatic stage.

Schumann-Heink was called from the grave of her desperation and hopelessness by someone closest to her. She was unbound and let go by the voice of God calling out to her through the words of her own child.

Who might be speaking words of healing and liberation to us? How are we being used by the One who is the resurrection and life to unbind those closest to us?

As I do for you, please pray for me,

Most Reverend Jeffrey S. Grob
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