

The Military & Hospitaller Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem
Grand Master: H.E. Don Francisco de Borbon Graf von Hardenberg GCLJ



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Ecclesiastical Grand Prior

To the members of the Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem

The Feast of St Lazarus 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On July 29th the Church celebrates the Feast of St Lazarus, and of course with him, his sisters Martha and Mary. The text surrounding the raising of our patron which St John gives us in his Gospel is full of riches! We already know from the Gospel of Luke that this was a family that welcomed Jesus into their home. Such is the familiarity that the sisters can simply send the message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

We know of course that the love of the Lord is both everlasting and for all. It is for love of the world that he came. For the world yes, but it is not simply a general love for that countless crowd but a truly personal love – he knows each of us better than we know ourselves. And because it is personal, his consistent love for each of us is responsive, even different according to our needs and circumstances, sometimes gentle, sometimes perhaps, a 'tough love'. We certainly see this in his treatment of the first ones he called to be with him!

Knowing God by love...

Like Lazarus, whose name is so linked with ours, we must have the courage to open our hearts to that divine love and allow ourselves to be formed by it. Our Lord's most insistent question recorded in the Gospel is "Do you love me?" and he longs for us to say, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you!" The truth is, the God who *is* love, can only truly be known *by* love. Augustine of Hippo, whose Rule helped form our Order, though one of the greatest minds of his day, and ours, made

the great discovery we all need to make: *"We come to God by love, not by navigation."*

As I reflect on the welcome Lazarus gave Jesus to his home, I am also reminded that I must allow the Lord to be the Lord of *all* my life, to be not only guest but the master of *my* home and daily living. I once had a very devout young Columbian living with me in Melbourne. In addition to the various crosses and icons already around the parish house, he had the habit of setting up little temporary 'shrines' to various favourite saints on their feast days. Of course, it's not primarily physical signs about the house that ensure that continuity of living, but they certainly symbolised and encouraged our best hopes to allow the Christian faith to influence *everything*, and our best desire to be holy!

God has helped...

The raising of our patron is a sign that Jesus has power over life and death. It's as if the Lord's delay in getting to Bethany until Lazarus's body stank is to emphasise that power. The English St Bede, reflecting that the name "Lazarus" is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew אֱלֶעָזָר (Eleazar) which means "God has helped", says, *"Of all the dead which our Lord raised, he was most helped, for he had lain dead four days, when our Lord raised him to life"*. Though that be so, like the others Jesus raised from the dead recorded in the Gospels, Lazarus was to die again. The temporary raising, beautiful as it surely was, pointed toward a *greater* resurrection, an *eternal* life, a *better* 'help'. Jesus tells his sister Martha, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die"*. Then he asks her, and surely the question is also for us, *"Do you believe this?"* He surely longs to hear us say *"Yes, Lord I believe"*. Members of the Order of St Lazarus must surely encourage one another in that believing, and as one of the reasons for our Order's existence, defend and proclaim that belief.

Just finally, the name Lazarus gives a clue to our vocation as members of the Order. *"God has helped"*. In the name of God, that is, in his strength and with the love of the one who wept over the anguish that surrounded the death of Lazarus, we exist to help! We Lazarites help others. It's in our DNA!

As I meditated on the words of the Lord that end this story, *“Unbind him, and let him go”* I found myself wondering about the unknown trembling fingers that began to gently unroll those linen strips and face cloth, the wonder and surely the joy of it all. In a small way, when, as an Order, we help those who are laid low or bowed down we share in that call to unbind and set free. It’s quite a vocation. May it bring us joy!

Happy Feast of St Lazarus!

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