

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Mar 23rd 2024

### To give us life, He walks to his death.

We are now on the threshold of the Holy Week, and today's Gospel sets the stage for the coming events. The storm clouds gather....The Gospel narrative today picks up the events that followed immediately after the restoration of Lazarus to life. Some began to believe in Jesus; others report him to the Jewish authorities.

An official meeting at the highest level takes a full-fledged decision. It is tragic and paradoxical that the final reason for the decision to put him to death is because Jesus brought a man back to life. By raising Lazarus to life, Jesus has sealed his death sentence. "...it is better for you that one man dies for the sake of the people than that the whole nation is destroyed."

Caiaphas, the high priest, did not know the God of Jesus. His "god" was the devil, a murderer from the beginning. He passes the judgement: "it is better that one man dies".

Autocratic and oppressive regimes have followed Caiaphas's cold-blooded pragmatism across the centuries. Their so-called national interest so often overrides the right to life of ordinary people. Even in our times, nationalistic arguments are used to justify immoral procedures, minority suppression, preemptive military strikes, and torture.

The members of the Sanhedrin were more concerned about their power base than any national interest. They deliberately rejected Jesus' message of love as the only way to life and freedom. Caiaphas succeeded in convincing the Sanhedrin that if the ordinary people followed Jesus, there could be riots in the society and the Romans would come and destroy them and their temple. They opted to kill the prince of peace to avoid riots!

The raising of Lazarus from death to life finally led to the killing of Jesus. Jesus, in his free will, determined the Hour of Grace. He chose the Feast of the Passover for the journey to his life-giving death and freedom because the Israelites had taken their first steps towards freedom with the original Passover. During the first Passover, lambs were killed, and their blood was sprinkled on the doorsteps of the Israelites; thus, they were saved from the sword of the angel of destruction. In the new Passover of Jesus, a new liberation begins. The actual liberation would no longer be by the blood of lambs but by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Tomorrow, on Palm Sunday, we enter the Holy Week. Let us prepare ourselves to walk with Jesus to witness his passion, death and resurrection.