



THE ORDER

The Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem





The Order

Advent 2020

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✱ Spiritual Message ✱

Advent Reflections During a Pandemic

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Chaplain General

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As we have experienced from attending a virtual Chaplains' meeting to attending a virtual Hospitaller's meeting to a virtual Annual Meeting, this has not been a normal year, and I for one have been more than biting at the bit to get back to "normal." Of course, as a priest and medical ethicist, I am also too well aware of the reality: Yep, I can stop wearing the pesky mask, go out as I wish, eat where I wish, and wouldn't that be grand? Sure, except that statistically, given the positivity rate where I live, the odds on bet is that I would more than likely contract COVID, and that would not be a good thing. The frustration, of course, is that I want to get from "here to there" now.

In many ways, that is the way the majority of our society looks at Christmas. It used to be that the commercialization of Christmas started immediately after Thanksgiving. This year- perhaps pandemic-induced- I noticed the first Christmas aisles right after Labor Day. By golly, folks want Christmas, and want it yesterday! And then the 25th will be here, and Christmas cards will be on sale for 90% off on December 26th. In the world we live and move and have our being, Christmas is, indeed, just a day.

However, as Christians who observe a liturgical calendar, we cannot dare not- rush to Christmas. We have this "reflect" button that we choose to use each year which seems to magically appear each year right around Thanksgiving called Advent. It is our way to re-set ourselves, to detach ourselves from the noise of commercialization, and focus on what is about to happen- the arrival of the Christ child and the beginning of the Christmas season, which is more than just one day, the 25th, and lasts 12 days. My prayer is that we can use this gift of Advent to separate out the chaff and noise around us to laser-focus on what Christmas is truly about, not what the stores and radio stations tell us what they think it means. And to that end, a prayer for Advent:

Almighty God, give us the grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit God, now and forever, Amen.



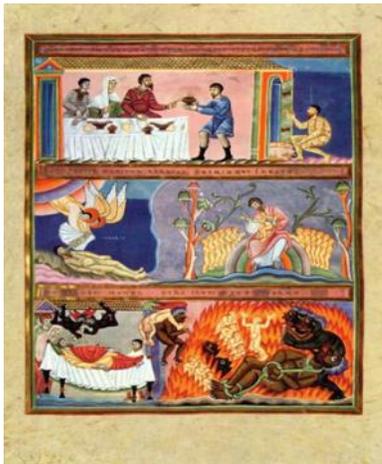


Who was Saint Lazarus?

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The Bible depicts two characters named "Lazarus", which has on occasion been conflated historically. The most recognized character is that of Lazarus of Bethany, also known as Saint Lazarus or Lazarus of the Four Days, who was a friend of Jesus, the brother of Martha and Mary. The miracle of Jesus in the Gospel of John, whereby Jesus restores Lazarus to life four days after his death (John 11).^[2] In the various narratives on this character, he is sometimes vested as an apostle, or a bishop. This particular version of "Lazarus" has been frequently used in science and popular culture in reference to his apparent restoration to life, including forming the main plot of the film, "The Lazarus Effect."

The second character, Lazarus found in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 16:19-31) tells of the relationship in life and in death, between an unnamed rich man (the traditional name for a rich man is "Dives") and a poor beggar named Lazarus. Lazarus was venerated as a patron saint of lepers^[3] and forms the basis of one of two missions of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem which is dedicated to two ideals: aid to those suffering from the dreadful disease of leprosy and the defense of the Christian faith. Lazarus is often depicted as a starving beggar at the stairs leading up to a rich man's house, and who was covered in sores that even the dogs came to lick those sores.^[4]



Lazarus and Dives, illumination from the *Codex Aureus of Echternach*.

Top panel: Lazarus at the rich man's door. Middle panel: Lazarus' soul is carried to Paradise by two angels; Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Bottom panel: Dives' soul is carried off by two devils to Hell; Dives is tortured in Hades^[1]

John 11:38-44

38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.
39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."
40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"
41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.
42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."
43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"
44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Luke 16:19-31

19 There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.
20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores
21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

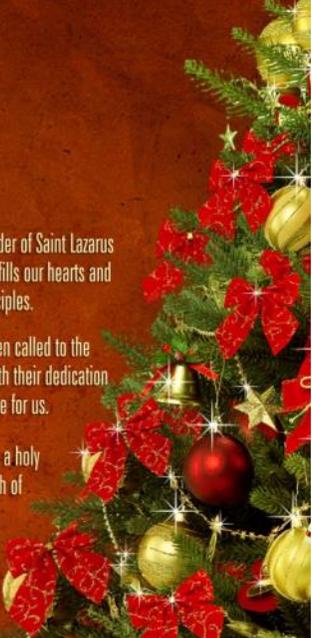
22 The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.
 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.
 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'
 25 But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.'
 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'
 27 He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'
 29 Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'
 30 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'




The Dames and Knights of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem in Mexico make vows that the Divine Child fills our hearts and encourages us to become his authentic disciples.

We wholeheartedly thank our members who have been called to the House of the Father during the current year, and who with their dedication to our noble cause always set the best example for us.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas Eve and a holy Christmas Day, in remembrance of the birth of our Savior, as well as a new year that brings achievements and happiness.




God, our loving Father, you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to counter all the forces of evil: sin, suffering and death.

Help us never to curse the darkness, but to join with you in bringing Your light into this world, the light that is your Son.

May the Christ Candle we light symbolize our desire to bring light into a world of darkness and hope into a world of despair.

Best wishes from the
 Grand Priory of the Maltese Islands

