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Saint Bernard Church
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THE SCRIPT FOR OUR LIVES

There are many different ways to fall in love with Jesus. One that I have frequently recommended is to read the entire Gospel of John.

John's gospel is unique for many reasons. One of them is that he engages in very detailed accounts of encounters people have with Jesus.

So two weeks ago, we heard John's story about Jesus and the woman at the well. Last week it was about the man born blind. And today, we have another very detailed story about the raising of Lazarus.

John doesn't waste the many details he uses in recounting these events. Like an artist, every detail is like a brush stroke on a canvas, and has a specific meaning.

There is a key element in all of these passages that is easy to miss. And it's important to focus on this element, as it has to do with the basic attitude we must have in order to do God's will for each of us.

Jesus makes it clear in these passages that He is carefully following a script. It's as if He's an actor in a play. He's the only one that knows all the lines in the play and everything that the various actors are supposed to do.

So, for example, in last week's Gospel about the man born blind, when Jesus is asked whether the man's blindness is punishment for his sins or the sins of his parents, Jesus says, "Neither; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him." The man has been blind since birth just so Jesus can heal him and convince people that He is the Son of God. That's the script.

We have a similar explanation in today's Gospel. When Jesus first hears that Lazarus is ill, He responds by saying "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."

So instead of going right away to see Lazarus, to pray for him and maybe even to heal him, Jesus stays where he is for two days. He intentionally delays going to see Lazarus so that Lazarus will die and be buried before Jesus gets to Bethany.

When Jesus finally does decide to go to Lazarus, He tells His disciples, "Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe."

Just like the situation with the man born blind, the death of Lazarus is staged so Jesus can reveal His identity and His supernatural power.

We all know we're supposed to do God's will, be obedient to what God asks us to do. So how does God communicate His will for each of us? Does God have a script for our lives?

First of all, there's the Bible and the teachings of the Catholic Church. God is never going to ask any of us to do anything that is contrary to Scripture and established Church teachings.

Second, there are promptings we get. In the Bible people get promptings from angels and the Holy Spirit. There are many examples of this in the Acts of the Apostles, which describes the activities of the earliest Christian community. These promptings guide us in what we are to do.

Third, God's will is communicated to us in what happens, events that take place in our lives that we often don't have any control over. This is what happened to Lazarus.

Think about it. What if Jesus had said to Lazarus in advance, "Okay, Laz. I've got to do something big so people realize that I'm God. So here's what you need to do. You have to die and then be in a tomb for 4 days. Then I'm going to come and bring you back to life."

Do you think Lazarus would be ready to roll with that? No. So Jesus has to orchestrate the chain of events so that this will happen the way it's supposed to.

Each of us is like the man born blind and Lazarus in the sense that there is a script for our lives, too.

The script requires that we know and follow the Bible and the teachings of the Church. Then we have to be attentive to promptings we get which are instructions from the Holy Spirit as to specific things we should do and attitudes we need to have.

Finally, and this can be the hardest part, we have to accept what happens to us, things we can't control. There's a saying that "Happiness is accepting what happens."

This is not a problem when what happens is a blessing from God that protects us from harm or gets us something we want.

But it's a major problem when it's something that we would never have chosen and makes our lives very difficult. It's very hard to accept things like that.

But Jesus is telling us in John's Gospel that we can only see if we're blind and that we can only rise from the dead if we die. So He sometimes sets up events in our lives that humble us, make us realize how dependent we are on God and make us beg for God's mercy and grace.

When we go through moments like this and reach out to God, He always comes through. He gives us relief or strength, whichever He chooses for us. And it's in such moments that we share in Jesus' redemption by uniting our sufferings with His..

I want to close with this prayer taken from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians:

“Lord God, we pray that we will be filled with the knowledge of Your will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to live in a manner worthy of You, so as to be fully pleasing to You in every good work bearing fruit and growing in knowledge of You, strengthened in every power, in accord with Your glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy giving thanks to You, who has delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of Your beloved Son. Amen.”