

“He cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ ”

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, one of the most touching moments in the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles came by surprise.

It happened one night on prime time T.V. after Jeff Blatnik, of the United States, defeated Thomas Johansson, of Sweden, for the gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling.

When the match ended ...with Blatnik winning the gold, Jeff Blatnik did not jump up and down. He did not make sweeping bows to the adoring crowd. He simply dropped to his knees, Signed himself with the Cross... and prayed to God.

When the camera zoomed in on his face, millions of viewers around the planet saw the torrents of tears pouring down Blatnik’s cheeks.

*Jeff had every right in the world to cry. **BUT** it wasn’t because he had just ‘taken the gold’ in an event the U.S. had never won before. There was a much bigger reason –a much bigger reason.*

Two years before, Jeff Blatnik had contracted cancer. Eighteen months before the games, he had undergone surgery. And now, in the face of tremendous odds, he had won the 2nd, biggest battle of his life.

The next day, all major newspapers carried Blatnik’s story. About his tears, one sports writer wrote:

“One of the most worthwhile things about the Olympics is that they remind us of the cleansing, therapeutic value of a good cry.... You watch the gold medalists mount the Victory platform, turn to face their flag, listen to their national anthem, and, in virtually every instance, their eyes begin to mist.... The sleek, the strong, the swift ...they all succumb. And in doing so, showing us genuine humanity, they become ‘irresistibly appealing.’ ”

*And that’s what happened in Blatnik’s case. He became an instant hero –not because of his victory over Johansson or because of his victory over cancer, **BUT** because he shared his humanity with us. Suddenly, the 220-pound giant was like the rest of us...in a touching, most personal way!*

I share that true story with you because we see the same kind of touching beauty in Jesus, wherein I just read to you from St. John’s Gospel. There, we see Jesus, the Son of God, weep at the tomb of his friend, Lazarus. It is one of the most moving scenes in the Gospels and, for that matter, in all of scripture. The reason is ...because Jesus ...shares ...his humanity ...with us! You see:

We tend to forgetabout the humanity of Jesus.

We tend to forget ...that Jesus got hungry in the desert.

We tend to forget ...that Jesus got thirsty on the cross.

We tend to forget ...that Jesus got weary on the road to Jerusalem.

We tend to forget ...that Jesus got depressed in Gethsemane.

Why is it important to remember ...such scenes?

Why is it important to remember ...the tears on the cheeks of Jesus?

Why is it important to remember ...the humanity of Jesus? you ask.

Well, I’m glad you asked that question!

*It is because the ‘humanity of Jesus’ is something with which we can all identify. **Because** Jesus got hungry, thirsty, weary, bone-tired, and depressed...we know he understands how we feel in so many lonely times in life. He knows what it is like to be human. Just knowing this –gives us hope!*

BUT, today's Gospel contains even more important 'stuff' about Jesus.

'What, exactly, is this more important 'stuff' about Jesus' ...again, you ask?

Well, I am glad you asked that question... again!

Today's Gospel not only shows Jesus weeping for his friend, Lazarus. It also shows him raising Lazarus, his friend, from the dead! These 2 facts epitomize his nature, i.e., his Hypostatic Union.

This makes it perfectly clear that Jesus isn't just another human being. It makes it perfectly clear that Jesus is the Son of God!

Jesus not only inspires us with... hope... by his humanity. He ...empowers us... by his divinity!
Jesus can touch our lives ...in a way utterly 'untouchable' by any other human being.

You see, the Olympic story about Jeff Blatnik and the Gospel-story about Lazarus ...'speak' to us about Jesus in a 'dual' way: his total humanity & his total divinity, both, in the same person! To explain:

1st, they (the Olympic/Gospel stories) remind us about the 'humanity' of Jesus. He became one of us, sharing in our humanity and all that goes with it. Thereby, he inspires us and gives us hope.

2nd, they (the Olympic/Gospel stories) remind us about the 'divinity' of Jesus ...that he is, forever, the Son of God. He can help us in a way no human being ever, possibly, could. He can help us beyond our wildest dreams. He can raise us to new life, as he renewed Jeff Blatnik ...as he raised Lazarus.

I now close, recalling God's promise to Israel, &, through Israel, to us, from today's 1st reading:

"Thus says the Lord God—

'O my people,

**I will open your graves
And have you rise from them....**

**I will put my spirit in you
That you may live....**

Thus, you shall know that I am the Lord.

**I have promised it
And I will do it,'
Says the Lord!"**

May that Almighty God, our Abba, bless you:
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.