

## THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

The resurrection of Lazarus has an important place in the Church's calendar with the approach of Passion Week. But this story, with its elements of love, devotion, sickness, death, and final glory, touches a tender spot in the human heart. It is no wonder that in many churches this event is recalled during funerals.

Our vivid icon portrays what is written in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of John's Gospel. The majestic figure of Christ is shown at the cave, depicted beyond the wall of Bethany. Several groups of figures are identifiable in the scene. With Christ are the Apostles who had accompanied the Lord to the grave. At the feet of Christ are the sorrowful sisters of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, who had appealed to Jesus to come. They poured out their sorrow saying: "*Lord, if You had been here, our brother would not have died.*" Near the cave are other people who are about to witness this miracle of restoration.

The figure of Lazarus, bound with burial clothes, is depicted in the icon. The burial garments are clutched by one of the figures, in obedience to the command of the Lord: "*Loose him and let him go.*" Another figure is involved with the removal of the stone at the door of the cave.

Death obeys the command of the Lord of Life and releases Lazarus. The words of Our Saviour ring out: "**LAZARUS, COME FORTH!**" It is also a preview of the "*resurrection on the last day,*" when all who have believed and loved the Lord will be restored.

Word spread quickly of this glorious miracle. However, as it is with human nature, there still were unbelievers. As the coming week will prove, from that day on they plotted our Saviour's death.