As I sat down to begin work on this homily I glanced over to the two icons that I have on my desk for inspiration. One is an icon of St. Paul, who as our parish patron saint was a gift to me from the parish upon my ordination. As the consummate evangelist he is a constant reminder and inspiration to me of our mission as baptized Catholic Christians to spread the Word of God. The other is an icon called the “Holy Trinity” by St. Andrei Rublev. It is a very famous icon and I’m sure most of you have seen it somewhere before. This icon is a depiction of the Holy Trinity in the form of the three angels that visited Abraham and Sarah in Genesis and who seated around a table. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit form a symmetrical triangle which conveys the unity and harmony of their being. What is most interesting though is that most interpretations of this icon suggest that God the Father is not the figure in the center of the image like one would expect; rather he is on the left side as you look at it. We know this because of the color of His robes but more importantly we know this because of the
orientation of the other two figures; their heads are bowed slightly and oriented toward the figure on the left. God the Son and God the Spirit direct everything to God the Father and everything the Son and the Spirit do ultimately gives glory to the Father. This icon is meant to be a reminder to all those who meditate on it that all is for the Glory and Honor of the Father. It was a great source of inspiration to me and epitomized and reinforced the message of our readings so far this Lent.

Over the last three weeks we have heard from the Gospel of John. They are three of the longest Gospels that we will hear all year yet they reveal to us a great deal about the true nature of Jesus’ mission and sacrifice. Two weeks ago, the Samaritan woman at the well was transformed by the encounter with Christ who revealed that he was the one who will quench our thirst through the life giving spring of the Father’s Spirit. Then last week Jesus reveals that he is the light of the world who will open our eyes, as he did the blind man’s, in order to see the truth of the Father’s Love. Finally, today Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead in order to reveal the fullness of the Father’s power and Glory by overcoming even the finality of death itself. These three weeks have guided us deeper and deeper into the mystery of our Redemption in order to prepare ourselves fully to see the true meaning of Jesus’ Passion, death and Resurrection as the act of our salvation and ultimately the Glory of God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Lazarus, Martha and Mary knew Jesus well. Martha and Mary even profess Him as the Christ and seem to understand a great deal of His teaching. Yet they still don’t fully get it. They knew Jesus could heal their brother and prevent him from dying but as is often the case, Jesus doesn’t necessarily do what we would expect. If Jesus had healed Lazarus, Mary, Martha and the rest of the disciples might have viewed it as another impressive miracle like the others they had come to know and obviously expect. Jesus’ time with them was nearing an end and He knew their understanding of His mission was incomplete. Therefore, Jesus used this occasion to deepen their understanding by SHOWING them the power and glory of the Father; not once but twice. By the raising of Lazarus from the dead Jesus showed them that the he had power over death and that his will was the will of the Father’s. This incident however, would also lead to a more active pursuit of Jesus as a danger to the Jewish people by the Jewish leadership who felt it was better sacrifice one person for the sake of the nation. This incident galvanized their hatred for Jesus and therefore would lead to the ultimate glorification of God through His passion, death and resurrection and the total conquest of death.

This incident became the fulfillment of God’s promise to make things right once again by restoring Israel and all creation from the effects of sin. We hear this in the first reading from Ezekiel who was a prophet during the exile in Babylon. He
told his people that God had not forgotten about them and that he would restore them to what they were meant to be not just what they were. They will know that He is God by putting His Spirit within them as He promised. The same is true in the gospel, although God’s glory is shown in raising Lazarus from the dead; the fullness of God’s Glory will be shown in the Resurrection of Jesus. Lazarus’ life was restored to what it was before, but he was still subject to death. Jesus’ resurrection however, which conquered death, is to a glorified state that is no longer subject to death and which is a foretaste of what we hope to experience. Paul says in our second reading to the Romans, our mortal bodies will be raised also because of the Spirit of God dwelling within us who believe.

This is the challenge before us. Our spirit must be aligned and one with Jesus’ which in turn is aligned and one with the Father’s. In this way he continues to glorify the Father by guiding us to Him so we may honor him as well. Though we are busy people and Lent is familiar to us, we must take the time and be willing to encounter Jesus one on one as the Woman at the Well did so that OUR eyes will open like the blind mans to receive the light of Christ which illuminates the true glory of God who conquers death once and for all out of gratuitous Love. Our readings are showing us that to do this we must also be willing to look deeper and beyond what seems obvious. It challenges what we THINK we know in order to
fully appreciate what Jesus has revealed to us through the Holy Spirit about the Father. Only through deeper reflection are we able to fully grasp the Truth. Like the icon of the Holy Trinity, if we merely take a glance at God based on our current understanding of Him, instead of how He is revealed to us, we might miss this deeper truth and profound meaning, honor and glory that lie before us.