

Called to Life

Bob and Bev were married for fifty-three years. Their life together had been a dream come true.

They had grown up in the same small country town in outback Queensland. Their growing up was full of fun and adventure. Swimming at the local waterhole. Riding their bikes around the old quarry. Watching the Saturday afternoon matinee at the local theatre, with lashings of popcorn! Their families were very close. They regularly went camping or bushwalking. They enjoyed sharing meals together.

On leaving school, Bob got a job at Rusty's sawmill on the outskirts of town. It was hot and hard work, but Bob was keen to learn and do well. Bev took a job at Sullivan's Café in the main street. Old man Sullivan reckoned that Bev had the best smile, and that had to be good for business and the customers.

It came as no surprise to anyone that Bob and Bev began courting. It was the beginning of a new chapter in their relationship.

The moment came when Bob was to "pop the question". He knew how and where he wanted this to take place. So, with some help from his mum, Bob went to meet Bev armed with a picnic basket overflowing with goodies. They went to their favourite spot under the old gum tree near the waterhole. It was there that Bob asked Bev to join him in lifelong commitment.

After a wedding celebration at the local church, in the presence of family and friends, Bob and Bev decided to make their home in the very community which had nurtured and sustained them. Nothing made Bob and Bev happier than the birth of each of their five children and watching them grow into the people they are today.

Then, just before turning seventy-five, Bob died suddenly in his sleep. He hadn't been sick, but after a full and active life, his strong heart went silent.

Bev felt deeply the enormous absence in her life with the death of her beloved Bob. The pain of losing someone who had been in her life since the beginning seemed too much to endure. She wouldn't eat. She wouldn't leave the house. She didn't want company. She just wanted to stay in bed. Life was just too hard.

Today's gospel tells how the death of Lazarus leaves a huge absence in the lives of Martha and Mary. Yet through God's word, Lazarus is called to come out of the tomb and live again.

We don't have to be physically dead to need raising to life. We can be dead even in the midst of life. We can be dead in the sense of being held back, weighed down, and unable to find a path forward.

Bev was dead in this sense. She was unable to see a future without Bob. The experience of her pain and loss prevented her from living.

Yet, through her family, friends and faith community, Bev found hope in God's word, calling her to come out and experience healing and begin to live life anew.

Today, Jesus says to us: "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" He calls each of us to live to the full.