

## Week 5 of Lent 2 April 2017

Ez 37:12-14; Rom 8:8-11; Jn 11:1-45

Normally, I usually ask a question or two at the end of my homily. Today I am going to ask them throughout the homily.

All of our readings talk about life and resurrection. The gripping drama of the rising of Lazarus points toward Jesus as the **Lord of Life** and prepares us for the celebration of our sharing in **His Life** at Easter.

“If you had been here, my brother would not have died” (Jn 11:21, 32). These are the words of greeting from Martha and later, Mary, for their friend Jesus. What a greeting! It is full of pain. It implies the unasked question of “My friend, what kept you for so long?” Yet, it also betrays their utter confidence in Jesus’ healing power.

- When in pain and suffering, do we sense God is near, or far? How do we respond when someone stays away when we need a friend most?

Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person when he says: "I am the Resurrection and the life" (Jn 11:25). “It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood (Jn 6:40). Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life, (Jn 11) thereby announcing his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order (CCC 994).

The sign of resurrection he bestowed in raising Lazarus indicated the object of our own hope. "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." We obtain this promise when we cast all our sins, doubts, earthly attachments, and desire for human respect behind our backs and run the race faithfully to meet the Lord. We must desire Jesus Christ above all things, even life itself in this world. By this we obtain Life everlasting.

- Do I believe this? How does my life—the choices I make, my relationships, what I hold dear—reflect my answer?

Martha, whom Jesus gently chided on a previous visit, now offers the boldest confession about Jesus’ identity: “I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world” (Jn 11:27). Sounds like she was paying attention even in her business. Martha’s words ring with truth and speak to a relationship that was built over time: “I have come to believe.” Like Martha’s, our own beliefs are formed, supported, and nourished by relationships and within communities.

- How do we support those who are preparing to enter into the Church at the Easter Vigil? How does my parish community shape my belief in Jesus Christ?
- How do we encourage and support those who are members but don't always attend Mass or receive the sacraments?

God said through the Prophet Ezekiel, "O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live..." We hear St Paul in his letter to the Romans that only if "the Lord dwells in you," than "you are in the Spirit." He goes on to encourage us that if the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us, so will that same Spirit give life to us, and our mortal bodies. He is talking about the Spirit that we receive at baptism.

As we enter into the 5<sup>th</sup> week of lent, we know the end of our Lenten journey is near with Easter quickly approaching—just 2 weeks away. Yet it is but just a step in our journey of faith.

- Are we advanced enough in our faith journey to echo our Responsorial Psalm, "I trust in the Lord; my soul trusts in his word...For with the Lord is kindness and with him is plenteous redemption..."? If so who, and how are we helping others who are not there yet? If not, who are we asking for help?

At times, we can identify easily with Martha and Mary: "Lord, if you had been here". Of course, Jesus is always here. It is just that he is more concerned with a life that is so much more important than this fragile existence that we call life. When Jesus asks us whether we believe in his presence and power, hopefully, we will be able to answer with a firm "**Yes.**"

Jesus responded to the anguish of Martha by a very powerful affirmation: "I am the resurrection and the life." A few verses later Jesus is moved toward the raising of Lazarus when he sees the tears of Mary. Her accepted human vulnerability and her total trust in Him are models that assure victory for us too, over all the forms of death and darkness.

- Who are we helping to live a life in Christ, whether we truly are able to echo the response or not, and to celebrate Christ's victory over the grave and our redemption—that we celebrate at every Mass, but especially are preparing to celebrate at Easter?