

**Readings: Ezekiel 37: 12-14, Romans 8: 8-11, John 11: 1-45**



**Fr Michael says:**

### **The Resurrection of Lazarus**

We all face times of sorrow and grief in our lives and are aware of the difficulties and challenges that such times can arouse! We are at the climax of our journey of faith and vision, which we have been exploring with the Samaritan woman and the blind man. Today Jesus takes us with Him into Resurrection. Ezekiel prepares us for the scene, by comparing the Exile with death and the Return as Resurrection and spiritual renewal. It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus and we are raised!

John wishes to awaken faith in Jesus, by showing its effects in Him, We hear the challenge He gives and how people come to faith. Martha is our model, despite her feelings of loss; she makes her act of faith when asked by Jesus, who is the source of life, both physical and eternal.

Friends are needed now, Jesus is the same as us, so we can wonder why He hasn't gone immediately to Bethany. They share in Lazarus' death and so we can identify with Martha's words of reproach. We feel abandoned too, so how are we to respond? By doing as she did: going to Jesus and pouring her heart out to Him: "I believe that you are the Christ...."

Prayer is our key too! Neither a good life nor a close relationship with Jesus will, of themselves, be a guarantee against tragedy. Hand all over to Him. We will feel alone until we begin to see God is with us in the suffering, providing hope in adversity, strength in weakness! Jesus is a faithful friend, even in death he can still reach out – He is with Martha and Mary – in the comfort, support and affirmation given by all who help them. They state their belief in Jesus, even though they do not have all the answers to all their questions. He knows the anguish of grief, but He has overcome death by going through it and transforming it. He is our pathfinder and our beacon of hope.

May the words which follow help us at these times, when personally or we are with others: "I believe in death, it is a part of life – we are born to die, that we may live more fully! We are born to die a little each day, to selfishness, pretence and to sin. When we pass from one stage of life to another, something dies, but something new is born. We will taste death in moments of loneliness, rejection, sorrow, disappointment and failure. We die before our time if we live in bitterness, hatred or isolation. Each day we create our own death by the way we live. For we who have faith, it is not putting out the light, but putting it out, because the dawn has come!"

When we are called to share with someone in grief, from our hearts we might say: "In the midst of your sorrow, new seeds are sown – of consolation, hope, resignation and even gratitude. The winter will pass and spring will come to the garden of your heart. Those seeds will grow, blossom and bear fruit – then your sorrow will turn to a joy which none can take away."

## Homily 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Lent A 2014



**Fr Jean-Marie says:**

### **Theme: The resurrection of Lazarus**

The gospel of fifth Sunday of Lent this year is traditionally used for the preparation of the catechumens to be baptized at Easter. The theme of this Sunday is *Life*. This third instruction is not only for catechumens but also for all those reflecting on their Christian baptism. Lazarus was a friend dearly loved by Jesus. He is a symbolic figure which represents all those whom Jesus loved and all those who have responded positively to Jesus and have accepted him for what he was. Lazarus dies but then Jesus raises him up. He rises because of his union and relationship with Christ. This gospel makes the point that Jesus is the master of life and death. As Jesus has given life to his beloved Lazarus so also will he give life to all those who are his beloved Christians. By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus shows that he has power to give life to people and he is the Lord of life and death. Jesus makes a solemn pronouncement: 'I am the resurrection and the life.' He is the resurrection and the life of humankind. Jesus is the source of life, not just physical life, but the undying or eternal life of God. This new life is a reality that physical death cannot destroy.

This life-giving power comes out clearly in other readings. In the first reading from the book of Ezekiel, during the Babylonian exile, God's people are compared to a pile of dried bones and their future return is like a resurrection from the dead, when God breathes life back into them. In the second reading from the letter to the Romans, Paul says that in baptism the Christian has died to his former sinful existence and begun to lead a new life in the Spirit of Christ, and the presence of this Spirit is the guarantee of his future resurrection. Our own risen life began at baptism, and this eternal life has to grow and keep rising until after we have died.

Many people today say they don't believe in God and in the resurrection. Our readings invite us to have faith in the resurrection, not only that of Jesus but also our own. Martha is for us a model of faith that we must try to imitate in our daily Christian life. Martha believed that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and if anyone believes he will live even though he dies. She was convinced that her brother Lazarus would rise at the resurrection on the last day. She made a wonderful profession of faith: 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into the world. With Martha we are invited to proclaim our faith in God and in Jesus Christ his son, and to proclaim our faith in the resurrection of the dead and in eternal life.