

My dear people of God, today's readings focus on Jesus as **the resurrection and the life**. This death and resurrection motif runs through all the three readings. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, God will open their graves, raise them ... and resettle them in their own land (Ez.37:12). For Paul, the Spirit was the life-force behind Jesus' resurrection from the dead and is the same Spirit that will raise our mortal bodies from death (Rom.8:11). The miracle of Jesus in today's Gospel may be regarded as a kind of enactment of the theological vision of Paul contained in the second reading. In the raising of Lazarus from death to life, Jesus proves the truth of what he says in John 11: 25-26; **I am the resurrection and the life**. This death and resurrection also symbolized baptism; in baptism sin is buried in the water; the catechumens are buried into Christ's death, from which they rise up by resurrection with him, as "a new creature" and an adopted child of God... (CCC.1214; Col.2:12; Gal.6:15). Let us take a moment and reflect on the readings.

We see that many times in the Gospel of John, people understand Jesus' words in a human way, but Jesus wants to raise people's thinking and understanding to a new higher reality –**his divinity rather than humanity**. Thus, in today's Gospel, where Jesus said to Martha, "Your brother will rise" (John 11:23). Martha professed her faith in the resurrection at the last day, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day" (John 11:24). But Jesus wants to take her to a new understanding of resurrection, which is now; "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this" (John 11:25-26)?

Jesus wants Martha to know that it is through him that Lazarus will rise again, "**I am the resurrection and the life...**" Jesus is the resurrection. Jesus also wants Martha and all of us to know that for anyone, who believes in Jesus' death, has only the appearance of death because we live after death, "whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live." In fact, if we believe in Jesus, we will not die, in the sense that the life we live in Christ now will continue after death, "everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." So the resurrection has two dimensions: that is now and in the future, Jesus offers life *now*. The new life in the resurrection is for *now*. To prove his words to Martha, Jesus raised Lazarus from the tomb after four days.

In the Gospel today when Jesus had finished praying, he said, "Lazarus, come out" (John 11:43)! Jesus is offering resurrection now to all of us to "Come out of our tombs, come out of our bondage. Do not live in the darkness; live in the light. Do not live in **fear**; live in **faith**." Tombs are places of isolation; ask yourself where are the corners of isolation in my life? Perhaps the tomb of immoral things viewed on a screen, include selfishness, drinking, smoking, refusing to forgive... Whatever our tomb may be, we don't need to be rotting there. "Come out!" Jesus calls. Come out and come into life. Jesus is more powerful than anything holding us back, including our sins. He is more powerful than the forces around us and within us that are trying to destroy us. Let us take advantage of Lent and confess our sins. Do you believe that Jesus calls you to enjoy the fullness of his life now? Do you believe that Jesus is now calling you out of any tomb you may be in? Do you believe that even now, Jesus is saying to you, "**Be unbound and go free?**" Let us today accept Jesus' invitation; let us walk out of any tomb we may be in and allow ourselves to be unbound and go free.

Dear friends, I would like to end in a prayerful note, Jesus received the message about Lazarus' illness two days more before he decided to visit him. We expect God to answer prayer in our time, but sometimes God's time is different from ours. Also, sometimes, we may be tempted to despair and say God cannot do anything for me. This is like Martha in the Gospel who objected to the stone being removed. But Jesus replied, "**Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?**" (John 11:40)? Let us continue believing, praying and trusting in God, because with God all things are possible. Amen!