

March 9, 2008  
Fifth Sunday of Lent  
First Reading: Ezekiel 37:12-14  
Second Reading: Romans 8:8-11  
Gospel Reading: John 11:1-45  
Homilist: Deacon Joe Milligan

These gospels proclaimed during the last five Sundays during Lent cause us to reflect on Jesus, who He is and why He came into our world.

The first Sunday Matthew's gospel focused on the temptations of Jesus in the desert. The next Sunday we experienced Jesus the Christ glorified by His Father on the mountain top. The church then has us change focus and look to the gospel of John. John's gospel is a gospel full of hope, life, love and new light. The third Sunday Jesus encounters the woman at the well and then we see Jesus healing the man born blind. Today Jesus calls Lazarus to come to life.

This is why Jesus came; to forgive sins, to heal the sick, to bring those living in darkness to new life, to invite us to follow Him showing us the way to everlasting life, telling us about His Father, our Father, and showing us just how much he loves us.

Further on in the gospel of John at the Last Supper John tells us that Jesus speaking to His disciples a hope-filled comforting message knowing just how badly their faith in Him will be tested in the next twenty-four hours. Jesus said to them, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me. I will be leaving you but do not be discouraged. I will come back and take you to where I am going."

Thomas spoke up and said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

In today's gospel Jesus says to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even if they die, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" Martha replied, "Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ. You are the Son of God."

Jesus also asks each one of us; do you believe? Do you believe that Jesus can bring freedom in place of bondage to sin, bring hope in place of despair? Jesus can heal every area of your life that is wounded, despairing and sinful. Jesus has the power to raise up and bring to life anything that seems to be dead and decaying even in the most hopeless of situations. The light if Christ can penetrate the darkness. All that Jesus asks is that we proclaim, as did Martha, "Yes, Lord, I have come to believe."

Most of us here today are here because of our baptism into Christ. In baptism we were given a lighted candle representing the light of Christ and told to keep it burning brightly in our hearts. We keep that light of Christ alive in our hearts by living lives of love, care and

compassion. Living a life of faith is not always the easy thing to do. It can, at times, be quite difficult and we cannot do it alone. We need to have the support of a loving, caring, supportive community of faith; people praying, worshipping, struggling and celebrating together as our journey of faith moves us more fully with Christ into God's kingdom.

Our faith life continually needs to be refreshed and renewed. At times we might become lost in the darkness of sin.

During this Lenten season Jesus asks each of us to reflect about our relationship to Him; to confess our sins and ask Him to cleanse us, heal us and lift us up. Jesus promised that those who believe in Him would be equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will give us all that we need to be fully vested in this life that is God's gift to us.

We might ourselves; what part of my life needs greater openness to the

Spirit that dwells within? Has kindness and generosity withered into daily nagging and complaining? Has hope slumped into relentless discouragement or shriveled into harsh language? Has my prayer life dried up from neglect?

As Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb Jesus calls each of us to come out of the tomb that keeps us dead to God's love. **Now** is the time to renew our commitment to Jesus Christ. We have only to leave behind the burial cloths of past sin and darkness and walk with the loving support of other faith-filled people in the resurrection life of the spirit. No one comes to eternal life in resurrection without faith Jesus told the woman at the well, the man born blind, Martha and Thomas. And today He tells us that He, Jesus, *is* the giver of life; **He** is the cause of the resurrection, the anointed of God, He is the Messiah, God's Son. He *is* the resurrection and the life.

What is my response to Jesus when I hear the words "I am the resurrection and life?"