

For the last two Sundays the liturgy of Lent has been building to today’s readings. Two weeks ago Jesus proclaimed himself the life-giving water in our thirst for purpose and direction in life. Last Sunday Jesus proclaimed himself to be the “Light of the world” in the midst of the many ways our spiritual sight is impaired or blinded. Today he proclaims his most challenging and most comforting statement: “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” (Jn. 11:25,26).

With these words Jesus proclaims the twofold promise of a life available to all who put faith in him--a life that can be lived right now which also is a life that will never end.

St. John the Evangelist paints Lazarus as a symbol of all of us—dead to God and bound by sin. Like Lazarus, each of us is loved by Jesus. He weeps over our suffering and calls us by name to come out of our tombs of unbelief, self-centeredness, futility, depression, despair, anxiety—whatever “death” may be holding us bound, whatever life within us has died and lies buried deep within us, whatever has left us disjointed and dry like the bones on the plain in the vision of Ezekiel. To those who saw or who heard of it, the raising of Lazarus was a sign of Jesus’ power over death. But Jesus also knew that Lazarus would physically die again at some point in the future. The fullness of the “life” that Jesus offers and by way of a sign in restoring physical life to Lazarus would come about only when Jesus himself had been physically immersed into the whole of the mystery of death in our lives—physical, emotional, and spiritual through the cross. While Lazarus experienced a physical resuscitation, resurrection as given us by Jesus, is not bringing us back to this world and life here as we know it. Jesus resurrection opens our passage to a transformed life—not just after physical death, but even more, beginning and developing here and now the moment we place our trust in him.

The “crisis” moment of today’s gospel is found in Jesus’ question to Martha: “**Do you believe this?**” (Jn. 11:26) In proclaiming himself to have and to be in fact the

“resurrection and the life” Jesus does not launch into a scientific, philosophical, metaphysical, or theological discourse on how such a thing is possible. No, Jesus poses one question, and one question only,—“**Do you believe this?**” It is **the question of faith**. Faith is fundamentally a personal relationship with another being rooted in the depths of our being (our soul), a conviction about having been unconditionally loved by another and in turn returning a like love. “Faith” as the author of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us, “is the realization of what is hoped for and the evidence of things not seen” (Hb. 11:1).

All of us exercise faith in many areas in our daily life. For example, not being mechanically inclined, when I take my car to be serviced or repaired I put faith in the mechanic to not only diagnose the problem but also repair it and return to me a vehicle that will provide me transportation in safety. We all put faith in others in countless ways, that is why when such confidence is abused or violated it is the most serious of sins against another person because it has the potential to destroy life itself—physically, emotionally, spiritually.

If we can, and we do, so readily put faith in others in day-to-day life on a variety of levels, what response do we give to Jesus? Faith in Jesus is not a panacea that will solve all our problems, doubts, struggles or sufferings in life. In same letter to the Hebrews the author details the lives of Abraham and Sarah and some of the other faith figures of Jewish history who, he says, all died in faith—saluting a promise from afar. All face struggle, temptation, suffering and great trials. So, too, we can expect the full complement of human experience, joy and sorrow. Our faith in Christ St. Paul reminds us, was given public expression through the sacrament of baptism. In baptism we died and rose with Christ. This union with Christ through faith produced in us the gift of the God’s Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead planted and already at work in us as well as a permanent pledge of eternal glory.

Jesus’ promise to Martha that Lazarus would rise are the same words he speaks to us every day. We will rise with Jesus on the last day, but even now we can rise with him daily if put faith in him. **Do we believe this?**