



John 11:1-45

17 On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. **18** Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, **19** and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. **20** When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. **21** Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, **22** but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' **23** 'Your brother,' said Jesus to her, 'will rise again.' **24** Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' **25** Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, **26** and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' **27** 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'

Other readings: Ezekiel 37:12-14 Psalm 129 (130) Romans 8:8-11

This Sunday's extended passage from the Gospel of John is the story of the raising of Lazarus. Only the central verses are given here. You may wish to complete the whole story by reading verses 1-16 and verses 28-45 from chapter 11 of John in your own Bible. The words of Jesus to Martha in verse 25 give us the theme: Jesus is the resurrection and the life. No wonder he goes on later in the chapter to restore earthly life to Lazarus as a sign of the life to come.

Just as the healing of the man born blind was a 'work of God', inviting faith, similarly the raising of Lazarus shows the 'glory of God' (verse 40) and strengthens faith. All the so-called 'signs' in the Gospel of John do this (See John 2:11). The raising of Lazarus is the last and greatest of the signs. Both Martha and Mary are ready to witness that Jesus is 'the resurrection and the life'. The story concludes with the statement that 'many believed in him' (verse 45). But this sign also provokes strong opposition from the religious leaders who plot to destroy Jesus. The one who gives life will have life torn from him in return.

In the other readings too there are clear pointers to the Resurrection to come. The prophet Ezekiel relays God's promise to give the people a new spirit and raise them from their graves. St Paul teaches the Romans about the life-giving Spirit of Christ, the Easter gift of the risen Jesus. The Psalmist cries 'out of the depths' to the Lord with whom there is 'mercy and fulness of redemption'. The prayer is heard by the God of life.

How does this story prepare us for the celebration of the Easter mystery?

In what sense is this the greatest of the signs worked by Jesus?

We pray that we may understand and truly believe that God is the God of life.

We ask for the grace to live the time of Christ's passion and death to the full.