The village of Bethany is just over the crest of the Mount of Olives - as the scriptures say, about two miles from Jerusalem. The air is tense with political feelings running high because of the authorities’ opposition to Jesus. In the midst of this tension, word comes to Jesus from Mary and Martha in Bethany that their brother is seriously ill. For Jesus to respond to their call puts Him in no little danger, but, in spite of all tension and danger, Jesus finally goes to those who call and raises His friend Lazarus to life.

Strategically placed in these Sundays of Lent, Lazarus’ resurrection is a foreshadowing of Jesus’ own resurrection. As Jesus prepares in prayer to raise His friend Lazarus, He asks His Father that Lazarus’ resurrection be a sign to strengthen the apostles’ faith and that of all who are present – and, today, that includes us.

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus is the linchpin of our faith. As St. Paul reminds us in his first epistle to the Corinthians: If Jesus is not risen from the dead, all faith is useless. We are still in our sins, Paul adds, “and what is more serious, all who have died in Christ have perished.” Central, then, to living the life of a Christian is our firm belief in Christ’s resurrection - and in our own.

As a follower of Christ, what is our reaction when we are confronted by death in countless ways - from the horror of ISIS’ gruesome burnings and beheadings to those many, many incidents in our personal lives like the sudden death of a loved one, or the diagnosis of terminal illness? What is the underlying presumption with which we approach any of these various expressions of death? Have we made ourselves aware of resurrection in our maintaining a relationship with the God who promises eternal life? Do we remember the God who sends His Son into our daily lives to free us from the effects of our own indifference or even our daily willful rejection of Him.

Missionaries of resurrection, we become people of hope. Assured of resurrection, we are free to pursue those things which truly prepare us for life. With that practical assurance, we can offer our world the strength and motivation to deal with all the frightful problems of poverty and hunger, of terror and war, of societal indifference or political corruption.

If death confronts us in countless ways in our modern society, have we the faith and courage to offset this awareness of death with a profound realization of resurrection? That conviction can and must become the foundation of a practical Christian charity. It is an awareness that can prompt a world to find ways for wealthy nations to assist the less fortunate, to motivate peoples to put their energies into ways that lead to peace and not to war.
If we are called to pursue more deeply the power of faith in resurrection, it follows that such faith can actually provide support for economies that call all citizens to find structures of government to prevent poverty, hunger and homelessness. Ezekiel’s prophecy is timeless and should stir us today: “I will open your graves and have you rise from them. ..I will put my spirit in you that you may live.” Resurrection is not simply something we hope for to bring us to eternal life; it is something upon which to build our world. It is our hope for now as well as for eternity. May we enjoy it, and live as if we really believed it. “I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.”
Reading 1 Ez 37:12-14
Thus says the Lord GOD:  
O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them,  
and bring you back to the land of Israel.  
Then you shall know that I am the LORD,  
when I open your graves and have you rise from them,  
O my people!  
I will put my spirit in you that you may live,  
and I will settle you upon your land;  
thus you shall know that I am the LORD.  
I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
R. (7) With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.  
Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;  
LORD, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive  
to my voice in supplication.  
R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.  
If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,  
LORD, who can stand?  
But with you is forgiveness,  
that you may be revered.  
R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.  
I trust in the LORD;  
my soul trusts in his word.  
More than sentinels wait for the dawn,  
let Israel wait for the LORD.  
R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.  
For with the LORD is kindness  
and with him is plenteous redemption;  
And he will redeem Israel  
from all their iniquities.  
R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Reading 2 Rom 8:8-11
Brothers and sisters:  
Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.  
But you are not in the flesh;  
on the contrary, you are in the spirit,  
if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.  
Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.  
But if Christ is in you,  
although the body is dead because of sin,
the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 
If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, 
the one who raised Christ from the dead 
will give life to your mortal bodies also, 
through his Spirit dwelling in you.

Gospel  Jn 11:1-45
Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, 
the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 
Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil 
and dried his feet with her hair; 
it was her brother Lazarus who was ill. 
So the sisters sent word to him saying, 
“Master, the one you love is ill.”

When Jesus heard this he said, 
“This illness is not to end in death, 
but is for the glory of God, 
that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 
So when he heard that he was ill, 
he remained for two days in the place where he was. 
Then after this he said to his disciples, 
“Let us go back to Judea.”
The disciples said to him, 
“Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, 
and you want to go back there?”
Jesus answered, 
“Are there not twelve hours in a day? 
If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, 
because he sees the light of this world. 
But if one walks at night, he stumbles, 
because the light is not in him.”
He said this, and then told them, 
“Our friend Lazarus is asleep, 
but I am going to awaken him.”
So the disciples said to him, 
“Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved.”
But Jesus was talking about his death, 
while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. 
So then Jesus said to them clearly, 
“Lazarus has died. 
And I am glad for you that I was not there, 
that you may believe.
Let us go to him.”
So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples,
“Let us also go to die with him.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus
had already been in the tomb for four days.
Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away.
And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary
to comfort them about their brother.
When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,
she went to meet him;
but Mary sat at home.
Martha said to Jesus,
“Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died.
But even now I know that whatever you ask of God,
God will give you.”
Jesus said to her,
“Your brother will rise.”
Martha said to him,
“I know he will rise,
in the resurrection on the last day.”
Jesus told her,
“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?”
She said to him, “Yes, Lord.
I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,
the one who is coming into the world.”

When she had said this,
she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying,
“The teacher is here and is asking for you.”
As soon as she heard this,
she rose quickly and went to him.
For Jesus had not yet come into the village,
but was still where Martha had met him.
So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her
saw Mary get up quickly and go out,
they followed her,
presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.
When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him,
she fell at his feet and said to him,
“Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died.”
When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping,
he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said,
“Where have you laid him?”
They said to him, “Sir, come and see.”
And Jesus wept.
So the Jews said, “See how he loved him.”
But some of them said,
“Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man
have done something so that this man would not have died?”

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb.
It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.
Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”
Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him,
“Lord, by now there will be a stench;
he has been dead for four days.”
Jesus said to her,
“Did I not tell you that if you believe
you will see the glory of God?”
So they took away the stone.
And Jesus raised his eyes and said,
“Father, I thank you for hearing me.
I know that you always hear me;
but because of the crowd here I have said this,
that they may believe that you sent me.”
And when he had said this,
He cried out in a loud voice,
“Lazarus, come out!”
The dead man came out,
tied hand and foot with burial bands,
and his face was wrapped in a cloth.
So Jesus said to them,
“ Untie him and let him go.”
Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary
and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

Jer 31: 31-34; Heb 5: 7-9; Jn 12: 20-33

When a prophecy is fulfilled, do we know it? When we are living in prophetic times, do we know it?
Last Sunday was Laetare Sunday. We are called to live joy – especially during Lent.

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant, and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and relatives how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15

R. (12a) **Create a clean heart in me, O God.**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. Thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin cleanse me. R.

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy Spirit take not from me. R.

Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me. I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall return to you. R.

In the days when Christ Jesus was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.
Gospel
Some Greeks who had come to worship at the Passover Feast came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus.”
Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.
Jesus answered them,
“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
Amen, amen, I say to you,
unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.
Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life.
Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be.
The Father will honor whoever serves me.

“I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’?
But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”
Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.”
The crowd there heard it and said it was thunder; but others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”
Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.”
He said this indicating the kind of death he would die.