

I am the resurrection and the life.

Amidst the fear and anxiety that rages over the covid 19 pandemic and the latest reality of a national lockdown. This is the fifth Sunday in the season of lent, our first weekend in the period of the nationwide lockdown. We hear all kinds of reports concerning the virus, on how it is impacting the world and changing the way we live and interact. Our thoughts and prayers go out to those who are infected with the virus, those at home in self isolation not knowing whether they are infected or not for those in hospital, those who are in danger of death and for those mourning the dead. In countries where the death toll is in the hundreds every day, we pray with renewed fervour that their souls rest in peace and rise in Glory.

I acknowledge those who will listen to this reflection and I pray that you will be at peace amid all that is happening and filled with hope for the future.

I greet you all and wish you well during this time. We are an Easter people. We live in the resurrection of Jesus our Saviour.

I ask that you please take some time and read through this Sunday's readings.

The theme that runs through all the readings, including the psalm is about restoration.

The second reading acknowledges that there is death in us but despite this we will be raised to life by Him who raised Jesus from the dead.

In the First reading God instructs Ezekiel to prophesy to a valley strewn with dry bones, and he sees the bones brought to life by the spirit of God.

Ezekiel is led by God into a valley of dry bones, and God asks him if the bones can live again. This is so relevant to our present situation that is starting to look more desperate as we go through this pandemic. Scripture says that God made Ezekiel walk through the valley amidst all the dry bones. Amidst all the death and desperation God is surely asking us to look at all this with hope and trust in God's power to save.

We learn from Ezekiel that we should

Be attentive to the Lord.

Be obedient to the Lord.

Speak words of life and love over our situations.

Pray in hope despite what we face.

Trust in the lord who is the resurrection and the life.

In the Gospel Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead.

This very intimate, familiar story comes at the end of the book of signs in the Gospel of St. John. We are told that even though Jesus knew earlier about the death of his friend he delays and comes later than he was expected. This he did because of the glory of God that is to be revealed through what he was going to do.

The mention of the number of days Lazarus was in the tomb is significant because the Jews believed that the soul left the body after three days, just in case we are wondering, Lazarus is really dead.

When Jesus approached the house of his friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary the scene was set, the mourners were out and there was the atmosphere of death around.

Despite all that Jesus knew, the moment when Jesus saw the pain and desolation of Martha and Mary and those who came to mourn with them, he cried with them.

This shows us clearly that Jesus feels our pain and hurt, Jesus is with us through our challenges. God does not leave us to suffer loss by ourselves. God enters the misery of our present situation too. This is the blessed assurance that we all long to hear in these trying times. That Jesus is with us throughout.

What we learn from the account of Lazarus's resurrection:

Call on Jesus always and especially in hour of need.

Trust in the power of God to save.

Open your heart to the presence of God

Ask God to help you.

Trust God to save you.

I know that there are those among us who face confusion, uncertainty, fear and anxiety, loneliness and despair, My heart and my prayer goes out to those who are alone in this time of lockdown, those forced by circumstances to spend this time in physical isolation, a special prayer goes out to the elderly and those less fortunate, the most vulnerable amongst us the children and those with compromised immune systems, our emergency personnel and those in essential services, I pray that God who does not only raise us up but also gives us life will teach us new ways of how to live. New ways of making human connections and strengthen the human spirit even in a time devoid of physical contact that we will reach out and touch each other during this time and share the life Christ bought for us through his precious blood.

May you and all whom God has given you to love be encouraged and renewed. With Jesus we pray: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me,