

SUNDAY PLUS

Don't lose hope

A Year of the Word

Calling the dead to new life

by Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

In today's Gospel we hear how the death of Lazarus leaves a large absence in the lives of those who loved him. By the time Jesus arrives Lazarus is already dead and Martha voices her regret: if Jesus had been with them earlier, things would surely have turned out differently.

When Jesus calls the dead Lazarus to come forth he is still wearing the clothes of a dead man. He is still enshrouded. Jesus now addresses the community: "Unbind

him, and let him go free." In obeying the word of Jesus the community plays its part in helping Lazarus unwind and emerge into the light of his new life.

The story of the raising of Lazarus proclaims the great truth that Jesus is Lord of life. He has power to call us out of our tombs – for the Christian life only begins when we, even though we are dead, hear the word of God and obey it. We know from experience that we don't have to be dead physically to be in need of being raised up. We can be dead in the midst of life – hoping for a word from family or friends that will put us together again.

The voice of Jesus calls us all away from making the tomb our natural habitat. It also challenges us to take responsibility for our brother or sister who, like Lazarus, is loved by Jesus. If we see someone buried alive we are invited to do as Jesus and the community do in the Gospel: call them, and help them to go free. If we do that as part of our Lenten task, then resurrection at Easter won't come as too much of a surprise.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk



"Imagine that moment that will come, when Jesus will take us by the hand and tell us: 'Come, come with me. Arise.' There, hope will end and reality will abide, the reality of life. Think hard: Jesus himself will come to each of us and take us by the hand, with his tenderness, his meekness, his love."

Pope Francis

Inspire hope

by Jo Siedlecka

When Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany it must have been such a sad scene. The good friends with whom he used to stay had suffered a terrible loss. Seeing his friends weeping, Jesus wept with them. He felt the pain of the loss of a loved one just as we do. Then Martha said to Jesus: "I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus then makes

this incredible statement: "I am the resurrection". To consider Jesus just as a friend in this life is not enough – he is also the resurrection. All who believe in these two aspects of Jesus experience his love and power in life and death. How powerful his words were when he called Lazarus out of the tomb!

When I am feeling hopeless Lord, may my faith be as strong as Martha's and may I hear your voice as Lazarus did.

Jo Siedlecka's website, Independent Catholic News is at www.indcatholicnews.com

Maintain Hope

by Bridie Stringer

In the Gospel account of the raising of Lazarus, Martha and Mary both think that Jesus needs to make a house-call before Lazarus deteriorates to the point where he is beyond recovery and they reproach him with the words: "if you had been here..." However, even in the presence of mortal decay (Lazarus by this stage is starting to decompose), Jesus can still restore life. His apparent lack of urgency to walk a couple of miles to get there in time initially looks like insensitivity but he too is moved to tears by the loss of his friend.

Jesus has chosen to delay his arrival in order to show exactly who he is. His decision to wait is, of course, vindicated as he calls the dead man forth from his burial

chamber. Even against all the odds, Jesus delivers on his promises. Unlike the sorrowful sisters, we can now confidently begin our requests with the words: "Lord, now that you are here..."

Bridie Stringer is married with two daughters, a son-in law and "two adorable grandsons".

Loving Lord, I bring before you everyone I know and love who has died. You know the times when I have felt lonely and my heart has ached for their company. Yet I know that you love them even more than I do. Give them your eternal life. Let them live in my heart. Tell them that I love them. 🙏 Amen.

Today:
Ezekiel 37:12-14
Romans 8:8-11
John 11:1-45

Monday:
Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62
John 8:1-11

Tuesday:
Numbers 21:4-9
John 8:21-30

Wednesday:
Daniel 3:14-20, 24-25, 28
John 8:31-42

Thursday:
Genesis 17:3-9
John 8:51-59

Friday:
Jeremiah 20:10-13
John 10:31-42

Saturday:
Ezekiel 37:21-28
John 11:45-56

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 50:4-7
Philippians 2:6-11
Matthew 26:14 – 27:66