

April 2, 2017

Ezekiel 37: 12-14

Romans 8: 8-11

John 11: 1-45

If we have not already, most, if not all of us, will experience the death of someone we love. If we have a long and well-lived life, we will experience many sad goodbyes. Today's Gospel is about the Christian response to death.

Yet, who in today's Gospel displays the Christian response to death?

Not Martha. When Jesus arrives, she scolds him for not coming sooner. Then she asks if he can get God to grant a miracle for Lazarus. Jesus asks her if she believes he is the "resurrection and the life"? Martha sidesteps the question. Instead she says he is the Christ (the Anointed One). Martha is in the presence of the resurrection and the life, but, in her grief, all she can see is a miracle working Messiah.

Mary fares only slightly better. Although Mary also says that if Jesus had been there, Lazarus would be alive, she does not ask for a miracle. It looks as if Mary believes in Jesus. But then her sorrow and pain overcome her, and she begins weeping. Mary is also in the presence of the resurrection and the life, but all she can see is death.

Of course, the crowd, those who come to comfort Martha and Mary, are clueless.

Everyone around Jesus lets death have the last word. No one believes love is stronger than death. No one has total trust in Jesus. No wonder Jesus weeps!

By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus proves that those who believe in him will never die. Because of this, Christians follow St. Paul's advice: We do not mourn as those who have no hope. In other words, when saying a sad goodbye, we do not let our grief sweep us away like a tsunami. At first, we may lay on the couch and binge watch bad TV, but then we get up and get on with life. Someone once said, "Whatever doesn't break us only makes us more alive." Jesus would agree.

Reflection questions:

Have you ever lost someone you love? Did you reach out to Jesus in that moment? What got you up and going again?

How can we witness to others suffering from deep grief?

Reflection by Deacon Steven D. Zubel, St. Joan of Arc parish.