

5th Sunday of Lent. 34-A SMF 155Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8Ezekiel 37:12-14, Romans 8:8-11 John 11:1-45  
Response: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption

There is no surprise that, for all its brevity, Psalm 130 has ever fascinated Christians. One of the seven penitential psalms (6,32,38,51, 102 and 143) it celebrates the powerful mercy of God but in such a way that there is a clear way out of the depths: listen to God's word! The words *de profundis* have passed into English as an expression of being in the pits. Imagine how over the centuries, this psalm has helped address the experience of being downtrodden, pushed around, utterly depressed, sinful, even spiteful of God who is so stable, organized, well put together. The Bible reader can take these experiences and find a resonance in many parts of the Bible. One such place is Isaiah's exhortation, directed to returning exiles, to trust in the Lord (51:10). The same Hebrew word for depths is found there: "Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?" The depths of the sea are in balance with the waters of the great deep, a clear echo of Genesis 1:2. God is praised for having dried up the sea to make a way for the redeemed. Now Creation and Exodus have come together to effect the return from the Exile. What power! All of this is carried into the "*de profundis*," our exquisite psalm about God's deliverance. But one last note from Isaiah before returning to the Psalm. God signs off on this oracle of salvation by asserting: "I have put my words in your mouth," (v.16). That too is the unifying tread in Ps.130: the word of God. "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope," (v.5) If we are to see a passage of liberation in the two plurals, from the cry "from the depths" in the first verse to the redemption "from iniquities" in the final verse, that passage is effected by God's word, in response to the cry: "Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!" (v.2) The Psalmist is led to forgiveness because God heard his prayer and the plaintive trusted in God's word. Is that Resurrection? Lazarus' resuscitation to his life on earth, clearly intended to be an anticipation of the Resurrection is a response to the word of Jesus: "he [Jesus] cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out!" (John 11:43). The subtlety of the interplay might be lost on us were it not for the earlier statement of Jesus: "Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live." (5:25) Imagine Lazarus, four days dead and stinking, hearing the word of Jesus beyond the grave. But is the resuscitation of Lazarus not also an acknowledgment that the Lord's sheep hear the voice of the shepherd-king? Jesus had said that on the Feast of the Dedication (10:4,16), and dramatically restated before Pilate (18:37). Is this the path to be followed to live resurrection faith? In the beginning God spoke and we became, in the end God will speak and we will live forever: "my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning," (Ps 130:6). Watching for God's word is such a bold expression. Do you watch for a word? The resuscitated Lazarus appreciated rereading Ezekiel whose famous vision was audial: "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." (37:4). There is new life for which we pray. Do you pray for your resurrection? Everyday? Listen to Paul how beautifully he put together not only life in the Resurrection but how we celebrate God as Trinity: "if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you." (Romans 8:11) The salient word in that sentence is "also." On it hangs a grasp of the Father's joining us to the son in the power of the Spirit. Pushed to the edge by grief, the reproach "*de profundis*" of Martha and Mary brought tears to Jesus' eyes: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." (vs.21&32) Jesus' response echoes what Paul had said: "Father, I thank you for having heard me." (v.41)

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