

April 2, Fifth Sunday of Lent Development and Peace Solidarity Sunday

Larry Martin

Readings: (1)Ezekiel 37:12-14, (2)Psalm 130, (3)Romans 8:8-121 and John 11:1-45.

****I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?** John 11: 25-26

Jesus was teaching the Good News of the Kingdom and healing many and three years later in Jerusalem, He had Many encounters: the woman at the well to whom He declared: **“I am the living water” (John 4:5), the feeding of the 5000 to whom He said: **“I am the bread of life”** (mark 6:3). Some religious leaders would have been quite angry with Jesus’ prominent miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead: **I am the resurrection and the life”** John 11:25.

**In his encounter with Martha and Mary, Lazarus’ sisters, Jesus is among good friends once again and appears very human He was always welcome at their home in Bethany, and there are several occasions such as Martha’s busy food preparations contrasted with Mary’s need for important conversation with Jesus. We can see that Jesus was quite at home with them.

Ezekiel tells us in the first reading that the Lord **“will put his Spirit within you, you shall live...you shall know that I, the Lord have spoken and will act”. Ezekiel 37:14 Even from the grave and death experience, Ezekiel writes that they will be brought back.In Romans, Paul insists on the presence and strength of the Spirit of God which raised Jesus to dwell in them and give them life.

Jesus was a good friend to Martha and Mary, but He decided to stay away from Bethany in spite of Lazarus’ illness and his sisters’ request for Jesus to come.. Jesus arrives four days later and Lazarus is dead in the tomb. Martha meets Jesus, He assures her and she says: **I know that He will arise again in the resurrection on the last day....Jesus replies: **“I am the resurrection and life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.. Do you believe this?** Martha’s response: **“ I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”**

**Jesus sees Mary and her friends weeping, becomes disturbed and He himself weeps—a clear sign of his humanity with the death of Lazarus and the family’s grief. At the tomb side, Lazarus appears, drops the cloth bindings and comes out.. Jesus tells Martha that those who believe in Him will never die.

*What has happened here is very profound and we are asked to believe in a transforming resurrection and a life far beyond death. By raising Lazarus from death, Jesus begins events that will lead to his own death.

**The raising of Lazarus from a physical death is a sign for us of a deep awakening to eternal life that comes with Christian faith.

**Let us pray to God,who raised Jesus from the dead as the resurrection and life of all of us who believe.

**And now as a people of resurrection, ...we give our attention to those of a different resurrection who live and labour in unjust conditions.

Development and Peace/Caritas and Solidarity Sunday

Development and Peace was founded 50 years ago when Canadian Bishops expressed a desire to raise awareness so that Canadians would better understand the issues of developing countries, mostly in the Global South. The idea of the “Share Lent campaign**” was begun. This year’s theme “**Women at the Heart of Change**”, highlights the important role in every aspect development and invites us to learn, support and advocate for an equal and inclusive society, where women can participate hand-in-hand and in fairness with men in building better communities.

**We are part of 164 country members of the world-wide Catholic CARITAS organization which is the second largest humanitarian network in the world.

We live in a global economy that leaves **billions of people in poverty! (repeat) So many fellow human beings are not making it in the world economy as it now functions. And yet we have so much privilege here in Canada as a fully developed country.

** Our actions, partners and projects are firmly guided by teachings of our Catholic faith, the Gospel, a collection known as “Catholic Social Teachings” and many of the encyclicals such as Pope Francis’ “**Laudato Si, Our Care for our Common Home**.” This year’s theme “**Women at the Heart of Change**” draws our attention to the sufferings, injustices and obstacles faced by millions of women. It is an act of solidarity on our part to accompany these women and men in their difficult circumstances and to enable them to build better lives.

There is an increasing awareness of the importance to educate girls and women who have been left out. Pope Francis’ May prayer was: “that in all countries of the world women may be honoured, respected and highly esteemed for their contribution to society.**”

**The generosity of faithful Canadian Catholics has meant that \$600 million dollars have been invested in over 100 countries since the beginning in 1967. Development and Peace currently operates in 46 countries, with 194 projects and 173 different partners.

**Some examples of women in leadership in Development and Peace’s work are:

1. **Berta Cáceres of Honduras** was an indigenous Lenca leader, mother and environmental activist who was assassinated in March 2016. She was well-known because of an environmental award and also as a friend of Development and Peace. She was trying to stop the construction of 49 hydro dams and deforestation in her home area.

2. **Rigoberta Menchu from Guatemala** and another friend of Development and Peace who continues to work with indigenous Maya who were victimized in a military conflict which killed 200,000 in the 1970’s. She won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work. In her younger life, her father was burned and her mother and several siblings were killed.

2. **Ismène Garçonnet of Haïti** and a mother of three was involved in Development and Peace’s partner ITECA’S plan to build 800 reinforced houses after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Only one among the 800 houses was damaged with Hurricane Matthew at 200/km./hr. back in October 2016.

4. **Rand Sukhaiti of Syria** manages traumatized Syrian refugee centres in Turkey which give psychosocial, vocational, computer, literacy and sewing help.

Bad and Good News

Federal funding for Development and Peace's overseas projects has dropped to an abysmal low in recent years. The new federal budget did not increase overseas aid at all—Canada is at 0.26% of Gross National Product which is a very small amount given that we are a developed and wealthy country.

And now the good news...This month \$28.5 million dollars have been entrusted to Development and Peace by the Canadian federal government for longer-term projects over the next three years in Middle Eastern countries affected by the refugee crisis.

Our Solidarity

What does it mean to put the lives of women at the heart of the action. We have to support and recognize their dignity as equal partners alongside men. This process assures freedom and equality. Thank you for your consideration and generosity for the projects focused on women's needs—all in the direction of love, compassion and life.