

I am very happy to welcome you all to this cathedral this morning. My hope is that you will find St. George's to be your cathedral home while you are here in the Holy City. We have the great joy of welcoming thousands of pilgrims every year from all over the world to this cathedral which we see as the mother church for all Anglicans. You are most welcome and I pray that your pilgrimage strengthens and renews your faith in our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

One of the holy sites which is so important to Christians as Lent comes to a close is the Tomb of Lazarus. The stories of his sisters, Martha and Mary, and of Jesus making visits to their warm and welcoming home are well known and loved in our Christian tradition.

This morning's reading of the death and resurrection of Lazarus is a very powerful beginning for us as all Christians prepare for the drama of Holy Week. We begin to enter into the sacred mystery which life, death and eternal life are for us who are faithful and who believe.

What Jesus does in this story is an inspiration for the Christians who live in this land, and I hope for you too. Jesus hears the news of the illness and death of his friend Lazarus. When confronted with the reality of seeing Lazarus lying in the tomb, what does Jesus do? He weeps.

Jesus is overcome with emotion for the loss of his very good friend and the impact the death of Lazarus has on others who are there. But Jesus does not remain this way. He does not stay with his weeping. He is not helpless with only his emotions.

Jesus moves forward and takes action to demonstrate the power of the love and compassion of God so that people will believe and God has sent him to be the Savior of the world. Not for his own sake does Jesus act, but for the sake of others to strengthen their faith.

Jesus at the tomb calls out these powerful words, "Lazarus, come out!" Lazarus, once dead, walks out of the tomb and Jesus offers more words with great power—"Unbind him and let him go."

Lazarus is free to live a new life.

I am here to say to you this morning that many Christians who visit here from around the world weep for the Christians who remain here with the many challenges which confront our ministry.

The truth is that many Christians will not visit the Tomb of Lazarus during their pilgrimage. Why? Because this holy site is now behind a wall which separates our people from their jobs and access to schools, health care and family. Please understand that the wall is not the only challenge to Christian ministry, it is the symptom of a disease which is consuming the lives of Israelis and Palestinians. Jesus wept in his time at the Tomb of Lazarus and tears still are shed there, though for more modern reasons.

Jesus wept, but he did something more. Jesus took action which inspired others to faith and belief in a God whose grace and power are beyond our understanding. The power of God to bring new life out of death, what is possible from what seems to be impossible, hope out of despair, faith and belief where there was only emptiness and sadness.

Christians can not simply shed tears of sadness in the face of a political reality which is so destructive to relationships between the people of three faiths. Christians, whether from around the world or those who remain in this land, can not remain weeping. The tears are not enough to bring about change which will benefit all of God's children.

Christians find strength in their faith that resurrection to new life is not only possible, but a promised gift from God. Christians find hope that the future life will improve, by God's grace, and with our help in promoting the peace of God which passes all understanding.

The Living Stones who are the Christians of this land appreciate your being here because your presence moves us beyond tears. Your presence demonstrates that Christians from around the world have a stake in the future of Jerusalem and the Land of the Holy One. Your action in being here helps to remind our Jewish and Muslim neighbors that Christians are actively involved in their relationship to this region and its future.

Your visit helps keep the Christian presence visible as an important bridge of mutual respect and understanding among all people here as we work to forge a new future.

My hope and prayer is that you will find yourselves inspired in your faith with your pilgrimage. Tears being shed speak to the emotional and spiritual power of our faith. Accepting the new life God in Christ gives us, free from the power of death, moves us into seeing new visions beyond death and destruction.

We become a new creation, guided by the Holy Spirit, as an example to others to increase their faith, to give them courage, to be lights of hope shining on a new path out of the darkness leading to where new life is found.

The question for all pilgrim visitors and for all who enter into the mystery of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord is how we respond. My hope and prayer is that you will find room in your hearts to join us in some way to strengthen the ministry of peace and reconciliation and of hope for the future of the Christian presence here in this land.

May God bless, preserve and keep you during this holy time of pilgrimage and may God bless us all as we prepare to renew our faith which is rooted in the power of the resurrection.

END