

Reflections on the Gospel

ETERNAL LIFE

In today's Gospel, Jesus leaves what is for him safe country across the Jordan to go to Judea. He puts his own life at mortal risk in order to give life to his mortally ill friend.

Strangely, of course, Jesus, on hearing the news of Lazarus' grave illness, delays a few days before acting on the sisters' message. In effect, he allows Lazarus to die. This means that he can enter into and address the grief of Martha and Mary, and of all those who subsequently mourn the death of loved ones.

Martha takes comfort in her conventional belief in the resurrection of the dead on the last day. But Jesus majestically proclaims, '*I am* the resurrection and the life'. For those who believe, 'eternal life' begins now; it transcends the barrier of death.

Jesus in the end restores Lazarus to this present life. But, beyond a kindness to Lazarus and his sisters, this miracle is more importantly a sign and symbol that, in the sense mentioned above, Jesus is 'the resurrection and the life' for all believe.

What Jesus does for Lazarus in fact plays out in miniature the whole pattern of his life and mission. As incarnate Son of God, he leaves the 'safe country' of his eternal dwelling with the Father (Jn 1:1-2) to enter our world and,



at the cost of his own life, give eternal life to us all. Each one of us, confronted with the prospect of death, is Lazarus, the friend for whom Jesus will give his own life. We should hear the Passion with this in mind.