



The flowering of new life

Jeni Parsons *reflects on* Ezekiel 37:1-14

How strange to have a reading about a valley of people so long dead that nothing remains but their dried-up bones, on a day like this, when the celebration is of the life-giving Spirit of God. This vision comes from six hundred years before Easter Day. In these dry bones all hope is gone. There is no life and there is no future. This was the situation for the exiles, in captivity and away from their home and land, their food and their language, their customs and their God, so they thought. But Ezekiel prophesies otherwise to them in their despair. The word of the Lord is not to be denied, the word of the Lord is powerful and God calls this

lost community "my people" and will not let them go.

So at Pentecost there is a renewed expectation from God that, though the Church can seem dried up, though we as individuals of faith can seem dried up and lost, God will not let us go. God is in the resurrection business!

This re-creation, not so much as individuals but as a people, encompasses everyone wherever they're from, whatever language they speak and whether or not they expect the blessing. Resurrection isn't the end point but a new start. Resurrection doesn't ask politely and wait till we're ready, so look out! 🌸

God of resurrection life, take our old dry bones and breathe new life into us, our institutions, our expectations, our hopes and plans. Take and remake us so that others can know that you will not let them fall. Amen.

Fruits of the Spirit

– a meditation on Galatians 5:22-23

The almond represents patience

by Caroline Hodgson

"The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see a branch of an almond tree.' Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it'" (Jeremiah 1:11-12).

The almond was known as the watchful tree, because it was the first tree to flower – the earliest sign of spring.

Patience is not a very fashionable quality in our fast-paced world of goals and deadlines. "Most

men pursue pleasure with such breathless haste that they hurry past it," wrote Søren Kierkegaard. And it's well worth rediscovering the art of slowing down. Growing flowers, plants or herbs from seed is a good way to learn patience, because you can't hurry the seasons but must wait for nature to do its work.

The lesson is that the key to patience is faith. "Strengthen your patience with understanding," wrote St Peter Damian, "and look forward serenely to the joy that comes after sadness." And indeed, after the long winter, the almond blossoms. 🌸

“When you strip it of everything else, Pentecost stands for power and life. That's what came into the Church when the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost.”

David Wilkerson (1931-2011), *The Cross and the Switchblade*

Walking with Poppy What's best

by Gillian Cooper

Poppy has recently been diagnosed with diabetes. She is coping well with the treatment regime, but there is one aspect of it that particularly displeases her – she is no longer allowed treats between meals. Our walks have taken on a new ritual: Poppy trots along, or greets

another dog, and then comes for her reward. When it doesn't materialise, because clearly I have forgotten the rules, she nudges my leg hard with her nose. Eventually she settles for a pat on the head, with the kind of sigh that expresses how she feels about my inadequacy.

We too do not always understand what is best for us. We are inclined to think God is not giving us our due reward. It is natural to think that, because in some respects our understanding is as limited as Poppy's. But it is good also to remind ourselves from time to time that God really does know best. 🌸