In our first reading, Ezekiel prophesies, “O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel.” I don’t believe for a minute that the Lord was creating Zombies when he promised to raise the Babylonian Captives from their graves. If one checks into what Ezekiel was referring to in his prophecy, one will find that what he was addressing was actually the opposite situation. The captive Israelites had become despondent, disheartened by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple – they were like corpses in the grave or the walking dead. They had failed to make the connection between their bondage and their lack of faithfulness. They had lost sight of their mission, not only was their salvation beyond their own sight, but they forgot that they were to be God’s visible sign to the nations, of God’s never failing love – the covenant.

Ezekiel’s prophecy was that they were to live again, full of the Spirit and life that comes from a loving God. Though they were at the bottom of their history, God would raise them up again.
Though they had failed to live as a people dedicated to God, God would not abandon them, because he loved them in spite of their sinfulness. They would be called again to their mission, to be a beacon to the nations. As Ezekiel was sent by God during the Babylonian Captivity, so God would send his Son to raise up his people in the time of the Roman occupation of the first century.

Jesus came to restore the fallen relationship between God and creation, to restore to life a broken and subjugated people. The Jewish people were living under the yoke of Roman occupation and their own abusive and compromised religious authority. Jesus’ miracles of restoring the sight to the blind and setting free those held captive by their shame was the sign of the coming Kingdom of God. But the story of raising Lazarus from the dead was the most amazing miracle of all, something that was a preview of Jesus’ own resurrection. All these miracles were, in and of themselves, life-changing events for the individuals they were performed on, but there is a powerful message in these events for all believers down to the present day. See in them a wake-up call to assume our calling as faithful children of God.

Our calling is more than our own salvation. Our calling is to bring about the restoration of the Kingdom in our present day. Many have become like the people in the Babylonian Exile or the 1st century Jews during the Roman occupation – aware of our faith, but more like Christian Zombies who go through the motions of ones who have been born again, but not being truly alive with the faith. Those truly alive would live in a way that would transform society. This would mean more than weekly Mass attendance and participation in some enrichment programs held at the parish. These things are only a start and they are meant to feed us in a way that calls us to action that transforms our lives so that we can call others to transformation.

It would be easy to be lulled into complacency and overcome by the daily demands of a consumer culture and the accumulation of wealth and the feathering of our own nests. I know too well how I can be led away from the challenging dictates of our faith to call for justice, care for the suffering, share our time and talents with the poor. When our faith is reduced to going through the motions of rote prayer, Sunday liturgies, and feel good experiences, we run the risk of becoming the walking dead. It is then that we need to ask for the grace to come to life again in an active faith. It is then that God will again put His spirit in us that we may live.