As we near the end of Lent, our awareness of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection is more and more brought to our awareness by our daily readings. This year earthly physical death seems more than ever in our consciousness. Across the world a deadly virus is spreading. Thousands and thousands have died.

Daily life for us has changed dramatically just as it has for most people in the world. Television news and our daily papers are full of stories about how many are dying, we get clear directives about how to avoid death, and strong warnings that we have a common responsibility to work to stop this devastating loss of life. It seems common right now to view death as tragedy. But is death always tragedy?

It seems a blessing for us to have this time together today to reflect on death and life, flesh and spirit, graves and rising ---all that is part of this mystery which is so central to our Christian belief: Jesus indeed is Life! Whoever believes that will surely live forever.

In this lengthy gospel narrative we heard of Jesus’ love and care for friends, his desire to show God’s power working within him, show this to his followers, as well as to all the bystanders. But most of all the text seems to clarify that death is part of life and a mystery which we must continue to probe. The question is not only why do we die, but why must we die over and over.

We claim this as our faith and our hope. We accept it as a belief that opens our hearts to the Spirit’s dwelling in us: this awesome belief that our actions truly are those of Jesus alive today.

As church we are Jesus presence alive today, we are the body of Christ. We are not just people here to imitate Jesus but to make Him present. As Church, as Jesus alive today, we remember and celebrate and actually LIVE his life. Lent has its special function of calling us to participate in the living and dying of Jesus, our prelude to fullness of Life. Through us Jesus is alive: healing, forgiving, praying, weeping consoling, speaking, listening, loving. All is life, and all life is dynamic, nothing is static or staid. We are always growing, becoming, changing, loving because that is living. But if death is also part of living how else do we die? So where and how does death fit in?
Death seems to be understood as an end. Yes, physical death we know is an end. My friend Sister Shawn Carruth died Thursday. Sister Amy’s month’s mind was Friday.

Human experience shows us that there is a real termination of bodily life, a death we each must face, just as Jesus did. Lent reminds us that all of life is practice for that final physical death. All of life is living and dying. If we are truly alive, we recognize life as dying again and again, in so many ways.

Perhaps today each of us is invited to think of some small deaths that might be challenging us. Are there daily deaths we face/ little deaths that we are able to choose somehow in order to live a life renewed? For me this can be an opportunity to “let die” my tendency to want my own way. It can be the chance to face the struggle to end criticizing others. Practicing that sort of dying to the many things that block my loving, can surely free me and make my heart open to Easter joy.

When Jesus, God in flesh, lived on earth, we believe it was to show us/teach us the truth about ourselves: our purpose, our giftedness, our potential as humans. And, yes, what part death plays in life.

Today once more we share Eucharist. We sign our oneness in the Lord, by actually coming more deeply into communion. May we be energized in our belief in the living Jesus, whom we embody. Filled with the Spirit, let us engage in vibrant living which demands over and over dying. In that way we will be ever looking forward to experiencing the glory of our resurrection which has already begun.