

Fifth Sunday of Lent A - Jesus is *the resurrection and the life. Those who believe, even if they die, will live.*

March 29, 2020

Death is a word nobody wants to hear. Nobody wants to die, or see his/her loved one dies. It **causes anxiety, fear, worry, despair,** In the midst of the **coronavirus pandemic** crisis, all we hear on the breaking news are people dying. Gatherings are cancelled including mass. Some dioceses have already announced the potential cancellation of the Triduum celebration. We are all home-isolated: self-imposed exile. Do I worry about the infection of the virus? I do sometimes but I have strong faith in The Lord and with prayers, we can conquer the worry and fear. After all, God's love for us is greater than our fear or any pandemic. On the positive side, the pandemic strengthens the community spirit. How often will Catholics throughout the world say the Holy Rosary asking the intercession of the Blessed Mother with Pope Francis? Or all Christians united to pray Our Father together on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord? All faithful of the Diocese of St Paul to attend mass presided by our Bishop Paul via live streaming? All parishioners of the city to say the prayer against the spread of the virus at 7pm every evening? We shall overcome, may not be today, but definitely some day.

In this Sunday's First Reading (Ezekiel 37:1-14) the prophet Ezekiel says the Lord brought him in a valley full of dry bones and tells him to instruct the bones to listen to the Lord. Then God tells the bones that He will restore their bodies with muscle and flesh, give them breath, resurrect them to life and knowledge that God is the Lord. This powerful image of God's Spirit being breathed into the bodies so that they may live brings us back to the creation story in Genesis. God needs Ezekiel to tell this story to the people of Israel. They have lost hope and are feeling disconnected from their relationship with God. God wants them to know that only God gives life and has the power to restore the community to fullness. God wants Israel to know that feeling powerless and hopeless is a form of death that sucks the life out of them, creating despair. But they can be restored if they are faithful. Now, what can we learn from that? In the Second Reading, (Romans 8:6-11), St Paul talks about the same Spirit of God that gives life. He explains that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us and is responsible for giving us life.

As we read the Gospel (John 11:1-45), we have to look beyond the obvious. This account of the **resurrection of Lazarus** seems strikingly similar to the account we will hear of Jesus's resurrection in a few weeks. In fact, it is this story that precipitates the plot against Jesus's life and leads to his death and resurrection. Jesus is told that his friend Lazarus in Bethany is ill. But Jesus does not go there for two more days and not until after the disciples remind him that Bethany is the place where the people wanted to stone him just a short time ago. Jesus takes the opportunity to tell the disciples that he will go there so that they might believe. As Jesus approaches Bethany, Martha, one of the sisters of Lazarus, meets Jesus and tells him he is too late, that Lazarus is dead. Jesus tells her that Lazarus will live again because he, Jesus, is ***“the resurrection and the life. Those who believe, even if they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.”*** When Jesus asks where Lazarus has been laid, Martha says, “Come and see.” **Jesus begins to weep.** Martha sends for her sister, Mary, and asks her to come join them. The other mourners follow her because they think that she is going to the tomb to mourn. The tomb is described as a cave with a large stone in front of it. Jesus asks them to roll away the stone. Then he looks upward and thanks his Father for always hearing him. He calls into the cave and with a loud voice, tells Lazarus to come out. Lazarus does come out proving once again that only God gives life.

As a part of our Lenten journey we are given yet another opportunity to walk a path towards restoration with Jesus. We are reminded that only God gives life. Hearing these stories

during Lent gives us a chance to examine whether we are living according to the Spirit or not. As we are near the end of Lent, we are being reminded that God's Spirit is the source of our life. We are not only being prepared for Christ's resurrection but our own. These stories give us hope that God will continue to give life even over death. We can make some choices about how we get to Easter. We can choose not to focus on the things of the world that distract us and drain our life from us. We can choose to love and accept others who are different from us. We can choose to nurture a sense that we are more important as a family together rather than as an individual. We can be restored by allowing the Spirit of God to give us life. We can choose to live as Jesus lived. We can come out of our tomb of selfishness and live our call to be a community of faith focused on the strength of our unity, specially during this Coronavirus pandemic. By putting to death those things that separate us from God and each other, we can be resurrected to life in Spirit as faithful believers.

Three weeks ago one night, I woke up suddenly in the middle of the night with the theme song of the 1960 film "Exodus" **This land is mine** ringing in my head. I was totally confused and fell sleep again. Next morning the tune rang in my head again. Now I know why. My guardian angel gave me a vision and this is the result: (Tune to This Land is mine)

God created us In the likeness of His In the majestic plan of His. And when the darkness comes He guides us on His way To the dwelling place where the light of Christ is. And when we fall Into the earthly sinful pit His merciful love pulls us out of it. Tho' we're all sinful men And when He's by our side With faith and prayers we know we'll be strong. He takes our hand And guide us on His way And walk His beautiful path with us. Tho' we're all sinful men But with His mercifulness Full of love and care we know we'll be strong. To fight the virus spread Together we pray To pray for peace back to earth And if we die our new lives begin.