

March 26, 2023
5th Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Psalm: 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45

Notes from Bishop Peter

THEME: JESUS SAYS, "I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE..."

1. Before turning to the Gospel, let us reflect on that beautiful second reading from St. Paul's letter to the Romans. It is a summary of Paul's reflections on the Holy Spirit. "If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then the one who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit dwelling in you."
 - a. The Holy Spirit does in fact live in you from the moment you were baptized. Thus you became another Christ. After the celebrant pours water and says the sacred words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," He anoints the baptized person with CHRISM, a word from which we get "Christ," = the anointed one. That is why you can authentically say with St. Paul, "I live, now not so much I, but Christ lives in me."
 - b. The Holy Spirit gives you the power you need so you can live each day as Jesus would.
 - c. The Good News: Jesus is on your side. He wants you with him at every moment of your life on earth so he can lead you into everlasting life someday in heaven.
 - d. I often refer to St. Thomas Aquinas' hymn: "O Sacred Banquet in which Christ becomes our food. The memory of his passion is renewed, the soul is filled with grace and to us is given the promise of future glory in heaven." Consequently every time we assist at Holy Mass and receive the Most Holy Eucharist, Jesus renews his promise to be with us always and to take us one day with him to heaven.
 - e. Though our bodies are dying if you will, they will be beautiful again when Jesus raises us up. We say in the Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

- f. Saint Damien of Molokai found that his lepers were inspired by this belief for they would receive a renewed and beautiful body, free of leprosy and all other ills.
 - g. Dying and rising with Jesus is similar to the seed that dies when it falls into the ground and produces a lovely flower.
2. Jesus raises his friend Lazarus from the dead.
- a. Lazarus would die some years later from natural causes. When Jesus rose, however, he would never die again. When we die, Jesus will someday raise up our mortal bodies to be like his own in glory. (St. Paul's letter to the Philippians 3:21)
 - b. For this reason we say that someone PASSED, meaning from this life to the next.
3. In the meantime we have to die to ourselves and rise many times in our lives. Here are some examples.
- a. My friend Michael when he wrote a letter while in rehab saying goodbye to his addictions to drugs: "Our friendship and my loyalty to you are finally **OVER!!!** You have, for the last time, left me debating whether or not to give up my last earthly possession – my very life." Now he can live freely as he breaks the bonds of addiction, with God's help.
 - b. My friend who finally said goodbye to his addiction to alcohol, thus saving his life and marriage
 - c. Those who say "goodbye" to pornography so they can live a better and more committed single or married life
 - d. Saint Damien when he went from his native Belgium to the leper colony on Molokai, knowing he would never leave that leper colony. He "died" to himself and said yes to Jesus.
 - e. Parents who get up at night to care for a sick child, knowing they must face a demanding day at work...

- f. Also and very important: The miracle of Jesus giving back natural life to his friend, Lazarus, is nothing in comparison with the resurrection of a soul which has been spiritually dead in sin and has now been raised to the supernatural life of God's grace. (From Father Garrigou-Lagrange, a French biblical scholar)
 - g. The Good Shepherd is always active and nothing pleases him more than to rescue a soul in sin.
4. Eucharist: May Jesus in the Eucharist strengthen our faith in him as we face much insecurity in our lives knowing that, with his help, we can rise and go forward. "Why do you doubt? Why don't you trust me?"

Amen.