

Fifth Sunday of Lent (A)
With the Lord, there is Mercy and Fullness of Redemption!
Ezekiel 37:12-14; Psalm 130:1-2,3-4,5-6,7-8; Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings to you with the words of the responsorial psalm,
"With the Lord, there is mercy and fullness of redemption" (Ps 130:7).

The central message for us is simple: whatever happens in our lives, whether we face sadness or joy, uncertainty or hope, we can always hold firm to the promise that with the Lord, there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Jesus could have come immediately after hearing that his friend Lazarus was sick and prevented his death. He could have quickly comforted Martha and Mary, who desperately needed his presence. But he allowed it to happen, only arriving when the family was grieving, and Lazarus's body had been in the tomb for four days.

It's strange that Jesus didn't come immediately. Sometimes we expect God to intervene in a specific way, but things don't always go as we hope. There are times we feel like complaining that we have been good and kind, and that God should answer our prayers. However, God understands more than we do, and His plans often don't make sense at first or may only become clear later. Most of the time, He wants to help and strengthen us internally. His delay wasn't because He didn't care; it was for a greater purpose—allowing the disciples to see how significant what was about to happen would be. He told His disciples, "Lazarus has died. And I am glad I was not there, and that you may believe" (Jn 11:14-15).

Raising Lazarus from the dead has a deeper impact than just healing the sick, showing Jesus's power over death and the promise of eternal life for those who trust in Him. Martha and Mary ultimately show their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior—an act of trust even though they don't know how everything will turn out. This is the same faith needed on Good Friday and expected from all of us.

Our Lord Jesus stood before the tomb where Lazarus was buried. He said, "Lazarus, come out!" His words penetrated the darkness of the tomb, a place of lifelessness. His words are similar to those of God in the Book of Genesis, when everything was dark and empty, and life began through Him (cf. Jn 1:1-5). Lazarus, who was dead, heard Jesus and came back to life. In this way, Jesus's words not only give life now but also eternal life to everyone who believes and follows Him.

The tomb, a symbol of death, can be seen as a metaphor for sin—a state of spiritual death. This reminds us that we do not belong to the tomb but to the life-giving Word of God! Jesus calls us to step out of our tombs and embrace His gift of light. In the second reading, Saint Paul explains that the body may die because of sin, and we might lose supernatural grace if we commit mortal sin (Rom 8:13). Suffering from misfortune, sickness, or hardship can cause people to lose the will to live, just as the Israelites felt during captivity in Babylon. The word of God to Prophet Ezekiel offered Israel hope and promised His Spirit to help them regain their land (cf. Ez. 37:12-14). This is what Jesus does for us.

So, we surrender to God, wait patiently, walk in hope, and pursue holiness with perseverance. We who believe in the Lord trust that we can turn to Him whenever we are lost, lean on Him when we are tired, find strength when we are sick, be comforted when we are depressed, and be inspired when we

are discouraged. We who believe in Jesus are confident that we can regain the joy of life after committing serious sin, as long as we listen and seek forgiveness. "There's no limit to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept His mercy or to repent rejects the forgiveness of sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss" (CCC #1864).

In life, some things simply happen, and God permits them; but in Jesus, whatever binds us hand and foot, leaving us dead in a tomb, can be overcome. Our grieving is heard, our sins are forgiven, and we are welcomed into the Lord's presence. No tragedies, pains, tears, or heartaches can separate us from Jesus' love, for he shares in our tragedies and pains, cries our tears, and bears our heartaches. "With the Lord, there is mercy and fullness of redemption" (Ps 130:7).

May God's mercy fill your hearts and empower you to live with renewed faith, hope, and love.

God bless you!

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Pastor