

The Fifth Sunday of Lent -

We have journeyed over these last two weeks in John's gospel as he presented to us two people who have come to faith in him, the unnamed Samaritan woman at the well and the Blind man. Each one of these have received from Jesus the grace to come to know him as Messiah and the Son of Man, who is the light of the world. But on this Fifth Sunday of Lent there is not just one person who will come to know Jesus in a particular way but many. Three will be the main characters of this powerful moment when Jesus will reveal himself as Lord of Life and conqueror of sin and death: Martha, Mary and their brother Lazarus. This moment is Jesus' greatest of signs in John's gospel because it points directly to Jesus' resurrection from the grave and triumph over the power of Satan, who bound humanity to sin and death.

Let us now turn to the scriptures for this weekend -

Death with hope in our Resurrection, challenging us to be alive and not spiritually dead by mortal sin, is the central theme today. Jesus challenges us to live in loving relationship with him every day, so that he may raise us up at our death to inherit eternal life with him.

Reporting his prophetic vision in the first reading, Ezekiel bears witness to the reanimation of the dead Israel in preparation for the return of the exiles to the Promised Land. He assures them that God's life-giving Breath will restore them, His people; will give them new life; and will resettle them in their land. St. Paul, in the second reading, assures the early Roman Christians who were facing death by persecution (and us who live surrounded by a culture of death), that the same Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead and Who dwells within us, will raise our mortal bodies to life on the Last Day. Paul considers the Resurrection of Jesus as the basis for our Hope of sharing in Jesus' Resurrection. For John, in today's Gospel, the raising of Lazarus, the "*sixth of seven Signs*" (*RSV 2 Catholic*) that Jesus will work to demonstrate that he is the promised Messianic Deliverer, is a symbolic narrative of his Final Victory over death at the cost of his human life, and a sign anticipating his Resurrection. Describing this great miracle, the Church assures us that we, too, will be raised into eternal life after our battle with sin and death in this world. Thus, Resurrection Hope is the central theme of the Scripture readings for the Fifth Sunday of Lent. The readings assure us that our Faith in Jesus, who is "*the Resurrection and the Life,*" promises our participation in his Resurrection and new life.

We heard last weekend from the Letter to the Ephesians - "Awake O sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will give you life." These words are most fitting for our brother Lazarus, who is awakened in the sleep of death by the command of the Lord Jesus and receives back the breath of life.

Here once again is a baptismal reality, for in the waters of baptism we enter the tomb but rising from the waters we are given life. The new life is the life of Christ who is risen Lord. Thus St. Paul will say, "it is not I who live but Christ who lives in me." This becomes for each one of us the pathway we take in this earthly realm in order to enter into the eternal life with our Triune God.

From this encounter with Lazarus who is called from the tomb of death and given back his earthly life we travel onward to the city of Jerusalem with Jesus so to be with in him in his passion, death and glorious resurrection.