

Fifth Sunday of Lent 2020

My beloved people, we are now a week away from the beginning of Holy Week, which starts with Palm Sunday. Our Lord Jesus has now set his eyes upon the final chapter of His life and our Salvation. He is resolute! We are all now living a measure of His Passion in our own lives as we see this pandemic surging around us!

The great temptation of this time is to give into fear and discouragement and hopelessness. In the first reading for this Sunday, Ezekiel recounts to us the promise of God not only to bring us back to life; but also, to bring us home. This is the explicit promise of God, (and God is always faithful to His promises!): You will not only be restored to life; you will also be brought home and restored to those whom you love!

The promise of God is made even more explicit in the second reading from St. Paul. When we die, we will not become some disembodied spook, a ghost, we will not be reincarnated into a cosmic loop until we get it perfect, nor do we simply cease to be, buried behind some granite monument. When you and I were baptized, we were immersed into the death of Jesus Christ, and Rose three times with Him in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Many of the Saints, who saw the glimpse of Heaven, declare to us, that it is not some ethereal state; but a real place, beautiful beyond imagining, beyond description, in which we will see God and know Him just as we are known by Him! They describe a place of incredibly beautiful vistas filled with those saved by Christ and a glorified creation!

In the Gospel for today, the Lord Jesus confronts the death of His beloved friend Lazarus, (the Hebrew name that means: God alone is my help!). He also confronts the grief and hurt of Martha and Mary! He is moved to anger and tears by the reality of death; however, the Gospel tells us something that is often missed: Jesus says to His disciples, (the Apostles, and you and me), the sickness and death of Lazarus, was “for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it...”! Jesus asks the two sisters and us, His present day disciples

for faith: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will never die. Do you believe this?"

Lazarus had been dead for four days; nonetheless, the power of Divine Love is greater than death, and Jesus calls forth Lazarus from death, and then tells the onlookers to "unbind him and set him free..."! So too, you and I, in this terrible time of testing are called to unbind and set free one another and our neighbors from the terrors of the night!

Pope Francis reminded us all of the story in the Gospel of the storm on the Lake that was threatening to drown them all. It seemed that Jesus was asleep in the stern of the boat, (wherein the boat is steered). For many, it seems that Jesus is asleep in their lives. He is not! He is inviting us to have faith and believe in Him, who immediately calms the storm, and calls Lazarus forth from the dead!