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August 30, 2020

5th Sunday in Lent A – 3rd Scrutiny

Readings: Ez 37: 12-14; Rom 8:8-11; Jn 11:1-45

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Life and death; hope and despair sum up the message of this Sunday. All three readings lead us to meet Jesus who is not only the water of life and the light of the world, but also the resurrection and the life. This is the central theme that the Church celebrates in this third Scrutiny with those preparing for Baptism at Easter. Today's powerful Gospel passage is chosen especially for our RCIA candidates, who celebrate with us this morning.

The readings remind us of the pain of death of loved ones faced by people all over the world, every day.

The prophet Ezekiel in the first reading reminds us that the Lord will transform death into life for those who believe in the God of life.

We tend to fear death. We fear the unknown: what happens to us when we die. Those who fear death the most are those who believe when you're dead, you're done, you cease to exist.

Our Gospel tells a very different story.

In our Gospel we hear the familiar story of the raising of Lazarus.

The dramatic raising of Lazarus to life is a reminder that Jesus is the source of life; he is the life and the resurrection.

Just as in any funeral we have attended, there are tears in this story too.

There are tears in the eyes of Mary and Martha as they tell Jesus, that if he had been there, their brother would not have died

If Jesus had come to Lazarus in two days, rather than in four, then Lazarus could have been cured and would not have died.

Jesus is God and he also felt the full range of human emotion. The Gospel mentions that he wept in sympathy for Mary and Martha and for what Lazarus had to endure.

But, Jesus knew that raising Lazarus from *death to life* would have a much greater effect on his disciples' faith than simply raising him from sickness to health as he had done so many times before with others.

Jesus uses the occasion to lead the two women through a gradual revelation of exactly who he is.

The whole episode is a powerful revelation of who Jesus is from his absolute control over life and death. In other words, Jesus has the power to transform death into life; to bring hope in the midst of despair; and joy out of grief.

What was a time of grief and confusion for Mary, Martha, and their friends and family, became an occasion of faith, hope, and love.

Jesus is everlasting life. He wants that for all of us. Resurrection and Life. He wants to show us too, like he showed Martha and Mary, that death is not the end; it is simply the next step to eternal life. With death life is changed, not ended.

Like a baby in the womb, it knows no other life and is perfectly content to be there. But at birth it passes through the tunnel into the light and a new life. Death is also a passage emerging into the light of God.

Jesus showed us that Lazarus' death was fleeting by calling him back to life. Jesus has demonstrated that truth for us with his own death and resurrection.

He understands our lives and what we are going through. At the same time though He is fully God and so wherever he goes, wherever we welcome him, he brings all that God has to offer.

I hope you've learned to hear Christ's voice calling you to believe in everlasting life; calling you to live your life fully and joyfully, under the gaze of a God who loves and cares about each one of us.

Stay safe and healthy.

Fr. Ignatius Tran