

5th Sunday of Easter (a)

Two weeks ago, Jesus offered living water to the Samaritan woman, and last week, he told us He was the Light of the World and gave sight to a man born blind. And this week, He tops every other thing that He has done in his human life, in raising Lazarus from the dead. Let's take a look.

In the first reading, we hear Ezekiel prophecy that "I will open your graves and have you rise from them....Then you shall KNOW that I am the lord, when I open your graves and have you rise from them."

And that's exactly what Jesus does, for Lazarus. It seems a little odd doesn't it that Jesus receives word from Mary and Martha that Lazarus is ill..... and waits around for another couple of days before taking action. And when he hears of the illness, He says that it will NOT end in death, but then two days later, when He finally decides to go to Judea, He says that Lazarus is dead.

It's all very confusing???

Well, if you think back, you might remember that Lazarus is NOT the first person that Jesus is said to have brought back to life. There was Jairus's daughter, whom he awoke from her death bed. He said she was just asleep, and the mourners mocked Him. And there was also the widow of Nain's son, that Jesus raised from his funeral bier as he was being carried out of the city.

But... neither of these fulfilled Ezekiel's prophecy. Neither of these he called from the grave. So Jesus waited until decomposition had started on Lazarus, thus the stench that Martha was warning of, to assure that there was no doubt that he was indeed dead. Then He opened the grave.... And had Lazarus rise from it.

It's interesting to look closely at Jesus's conversation with Martha. Jesus tells her that her brother WILL rise. Not that He, himself will raise him right now, but that he will rise. And when Martha starts going on about the resurrection on the last day, Jesus basically interrupts her and says, "I AM the resurrection..... and the life. Whoever believes in me, even if he dies,

will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.....” And then he asks her, “Do you believe this?”

So, why is this important NOW as we prepare for Easter and Baptism. Paul’s letter to the Romans which we just heard, kind of wraps it all together.

He writes, “you are not in the flesh, on the contrary, you are in the Spirit if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.” And how did we come to be of the Spirit??? Through Baptism.

And Paul goes on, “Whoever does NOT have the spirit of Christ does NOT belong to Him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit dwelling in you.”

Remember what Ezekiel said, “I will put my Spirit in you, that you may live.” Jesus has put his Spirit in US at Baptism, so that even if we die..... Jesus will raise us from our Graves.

The water of Baptism, is Living Water.

At Baptism, we receive the Light of Christ.

And, at Baptism, we die with Christ to THIS world... and we RISE with Him, to live our Lives in the Spirit NOW.....and we await His second coming.... When he will raise us, Like Lazarus, from our graves.

Ladies and Gentlemen.... This IS our immortality. This is our whole purpose in being alive in the first place... so that we might believe in Christ, be baptized in His Spirit, be fed with his Body and Blood, and then live forever WITH Him.

That’s IT.

That’s the Good News.

Jesus IS THE RESURRECTION!!!

And, like Martha, He’s asking US..... “Do you believe this???”