

Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

29 March 2020

Sacred Heart – St. Louis Parish

Reading 1 – Ezekiel 37:12-14

Psalm 23 – **With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**

Reading 2 – Romans 8:8-11

Gospel – John 11:1-45 **The Raising of Lazarus**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Here we are at our second Sunday without being able to gather together as a parish family. I pray that each of you are staying healthy and keeping yourselves at home. Before I begin my homily, I would like to start with a couple of updates.

We have been continuing on at the parish, our office continues to remain “open”, but I would ask that you please call or email the office in regard to your needs before stopping by. When you do arrive if necessary, please simply ring the doorbell and someone will assist you.

Since at this time it is best that in-person meetings should be at a minimum, I will be available by phone in the office. It would be best to schedule at time with Barbara and then I can call you at that specific time. No, confessions cannot be heard over the phone. Please, if there is anything that you may need, don't hesitate to reach out to the parish office.

I want to thank everyone for their generosity in sending in their parish contributions so that we can continue to pay our staff and continue to meet our financial obligations. Again, please feel free to drop them in the mail or drop them by the parish office.

As I celebrate the Holy Mass on Sunday, please know that the Mass is to be offered for each one of you and your families. I miss seeing all and I look forward to the day when we can gather together again at the altar.

In Christ's Love,

Fr. James

Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Lent

This Sunday we encounter the third in a series of stories that reveal to us three great gifts that Jesus can give to us. The first of these gifts we heard about two weeks ago when Fr. Stephen Kenyon was with us. On the Third Sunday of Lent we heard the story of the woman at the well. Jesus gave her, and He gives to us, the water of eternal life. This water not only can wash away all of our sins, it also quenches our thirst in such a way, that we will never thirst again.

Last weekend we heard the story of the man born blind. We heard how Jesus has restored the man's sight so that he could see. Jesus also offers this gift to us. He come and restores our sight. When we are blind, we often miss so many things that are before us, but with Jesus, our sight can be fully restored.

This weekend we come to the final story of this trilogy and that is the story of the raising of Lazarus. I am going to give away the ending right away - the gift that we receive is the gift of new life. That once dead, we will rise again, not

only when we fall into sin, but also and most importantly at the end of our earthly life when we will rise to eternal life in heaven.

In our first reading from the prophet Ezekiel, he speaks to the people of how one day God will come to us and open our graves and will have us rise from them. Not only will we rise from our earthly tomb, but he will infuse his eternal spirit in us. This has two meanings. It is speaking of a time that when our earthly lives have ended and our bodies are in the ground, He will raise us up to new life with him. But I would say that this also speak to our lives today in the sense that we often find ourselves spiritually dead and in need of grace because of our sins. When we sin, especially mortal sins, we can find ourselves in the grave, dead. Jesus gives us reconciliation. He washes away our sins with his lifegiving water. He fills us with his Holy Spirit, and we rise to new life through reconciliation.

In our second reading from Paul's letter to the Romans, we hear about how those that are in the flesh cannot please God. We are reminded that we are a people of the Spirit. We are not a people of flesh. Because we are of the Spirit, we belong to God and by belonging to God we can trust and have faith that we will never be abandoned. Think of the familiar words that we hear in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." During these times of COVID-19 it can be easy to forget that all we need to do is to turn to God. HE is our shepherd. His spirit is in us. We belong to him. The Spirit of the God that raised Jesus from the dead resides in us. This spirit will not fail us, especially in these most difficult days.

Finally, the Gospel, the raising of Lazarus. Lazarus was a dear friend of Jesus. They were like family. Jesus loved Lazarus, just as He loves each one of us, his brothers and sisters. There are three words that stand out and that are always striking every time we hear them. Three words after Jesus found out that Lazarus had died...

And Jesus wept.

These words are so powerful, every time that we hear them, but I think that they are more powerful now. I think that in many ways Jesus is weeping right now. Weeping over those that have lost their lives. Weeping for those that are sick. He is weeping for those that are stuck at home and alone. He is weeping for our children who are going to be missing school and learning from home and away from their teachers and classmates. He is weeping for those that have lost their jobs or are temporarily out of work. He is weeping for those working long hours in the stores and other essential businesses so that we can get the things that we need for everyday life. The list, as always, can go on and on and on.

Jesus weeps for us because He loves us. He weeps for us because he wants us to have new life. He wants to raise us up. He raises Lazarus. He raises him to new life. He also will raise us up as well. During these days that may sometimes seem so dark, let us have hope in this promise that is so clearly laid out in our readings today. Our God wants us to have life. He wants to raise us from the grave and fill us with his spirit. When we are filled with his spirit, we belong to Him and He will keep us safe. But, most importantly, He wants to

raise us to new life. Right now, we may feel that we are in the grave. Let us have consolation that Jesus is with us and that once this is all ended, we will be raised to new life. May we never lose hope. May we never take this gift and promise for granted.