

5th Sunday in Lent **3/29/2020**

Celebrate

In today's gospel Jesus reveals his power over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. The prophet Ezekiel prophesies God breathing new life into dry bones. To those in exile or living in the shadow of death, these stories proclaim God's promise of resurrection. In baptism we die with Christ that we may also be raised with him to new life.

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to a new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Scriptures

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Romans 8:6-11

The Gospel

John 11:1-45

The Message (Romans 8:6-11)

One of the most dreaded fears for many is to be isolated and alone. Ask any senior who has lost a lifetime mate or friend. That is why it is so difficult for many to visit a nursing home and to see the pain and suffering of people who are experiencing loneliness. To just hello to one of these residents brings a smile on their face, a relief that someone even a stranger recognizes them. I have begun to realize this since I have experienced being alone in the hospital so many times recently. When I even welcomed a technician who came into my room to draw blood I felt relieved. I have come to the hard realization that we are mortal beings who live in the physical world of being and very much in need of the physical presence of another person.

Now we all are experiencing for ourselves varying degrees of isolation and are dealing with it in varying ways. Some may be having more success than others but we all feel its negative and sometimes even in a strange way its positive effects. But, by enlarge young and old are deeply affected in some negative way. Our seniors are extremely limited and our young people are being isolated from their society of peers and from those all-important experiences of their schools senior activities. Suffering from being isolated has no regards to age.

During Lent, we need to be reminded that although we are a social being and physically need each other, we are also a spiritual being. As Christians we believe that the spiritual part of our being is God's presence within us. In the Apostles' Creed we state, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints....) In other words we believe God's spiritual presence, the Holy Spirit, is always with us no matter what we may be facing. It is this spirit that we physically share in common with each other as the church, the Body of Christ. When we are not together physically we still share the same spirit of God. We still are connected and can call upon this collective spirit to give us strength. Although we are apart we still are together.

Paul in the lesson this morning makes the distinction between the physical world we live, the “flesh,” and our spiritual being. To live only as a physical being is to lose sight of the totality of life especially when the physical world, flesh, becomes limited to us. Paul relates, “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.” During times of forced isolation it is so easy to get caught up in the “Woe is me” syndrome for our physical world has been limited. That need not be since there is the reality that we are still united with one another, not only in the common experience of circumstance, but more importantly in our bond of being spiritually connected as the body of Christ. I know this spiritual relationship has helped many who have felt alone when they face surgery or are hospitalized. They have told me that they feel the presence of each one of us who have shared their lives with them through the fellowship of believers.

It is helpful to realize that we share in the sacrifice of these days and weeks in order to help save the lives of others who are a part of our human family. And it is even more helpful when we come to the realization that God’s presence is with us. Paul reaches the conclusion which is one which we need to take to heart, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.” We are not left alone while we are in this physical crisis for we are spiritually together. The psalmist of old gives us further assurances during this troubled time;

Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;

² Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

³ If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

⁵ I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

⁶ I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

⁷ Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

In conclusion I turn to the old Hymn by John Fawcett:

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne,
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts, and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.

Offering:*

“We give thee but thine own, what-e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.”

The Prayer:

Almighty and loving God, we lift our thoughts and voices to you amidst these troubled times. We pray that you continue to comfort us and give us strength to sacrifice so that suffering may not spread. It is times like this that we need to stay united and of one spirit. Give us the patience and creativity to find meaning in the circumstances which we find ourselves. We give you thanks for all those who are placing themselves in harm's way in order to alleviate pain and suffering among us all.

Reach out and touch us with your blessing, We especially seek healing and comfort for , Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, Darrell Garrison, Al Honey, the John Family, John Kahl, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Terre Rones, Paul Sagal, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering fear anxiety, pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen
(The Lord's Prayer) by Agne G.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paET32d_VbQ

.The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

*Offering to be sent to:
Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042