

## Homily - Lent 5 A

Death with hope in resurrection, challenging us to be alive and not spiritually dead by mortal sin, is the central theme for this Sunday.

Reporting his vision in the first reading, Ezekiel bears witness to the reanimation of the dead Israel in preparation for her return to the Promised Land. He assures them that God's life-giving Breath will restore His people, give them new life and resettle them in their land. St. Paul, in the second reading, assures the early Roman Christians who were facing death by persecution, and us who are surrounded by a culture of death, that the same Spirit, Who raised Jesus from the dead and Who dwells within us, will raise our mortal bodies to life on the Last Day. Paul considers the Resurrection of Jesus the basis for our hope of sharing in Jesus' Resurrection. For John, in today's Gospel, the raising of Lazarus is the final and greatest sign of Jesus, the Deliverer, a symbolic narrative of his Final Victory over death at the cost of his human life and a sign anticipating his Resurrection. Describing this great sign/miracle, the Church assures us that we, too, will be raised into eternal life after our battle with sin and death in this world. Thus, resurrection hope is the central theme of the Scripture readings for the Fifth Sunday of Lent. The readings assure us that our Faith in Jesus, who is "the Resurrection and the Life," promises our participation in his resurrection and new life.

Messages: 1) Roll away the stone, unbind him and let him go. We often bind ourselves with chains of addiction to alcohol, drugs, sexual deviations, slander, gossip, envy, prejudices, hatred, and uncontrollable anger, and bury ourselves in the tombs of despair. Sometimes we are in the tomb of selfishness, filled with negative feelings such as worry, fear, resentment, hatred, and guilt. If we want Jesus to visit our dark dungeons of sin, despair and unhappiness, let us ask Jesus to bring the light and the power of the Holy Spirit into our private lives and liberate us from our tombs. Are there times when we refuse to let God enter into our wallets, fearing that faithful tithing will endanger our savings? When we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Jesus will call our name and command, "Come out, Mary", "Come out, Joe"! This is Good news for all of us: "Lazarus, come out!" This can be the beginning of a new life.

2) We need to be ready to welcome death any time. We live in a world that is filled with death, not necessarily by a killing virus like COVID-19 but we kill each other in acts of murder, abortion, euthanasia, execution, war, and terrorist activities. We kill ourselves through suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, smoking, overwork, stress, bad eating habits, and physical neglect. The most important question is: am I ready to face my death? All of us know that we will surely die, but each of us foolishly thinks that he or she will not die any time in the near future. Let us be wise, well-prepared and ever ready to meet our Lord with a clear conscience when the time comes and to give Him a clean account of our lives.

Amal