

5th Sunday of Lent
March 29, 2020
“Death Is Never the End”

Ez 37:12-14

Rom 8:8-11

Jn 11:1...45

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

A fundamental part of our human nature is that we all want to live. We want desperately to stay alive. We do all that we can to preserve our life. Furthermore, we don't want to lose our loved ones in death. The loss of a beloved spouse is heart-wrenching. The loss of a child can almost destroy us – because children should live far beyond the life-span of their parents.

Consequently, we resist death at all costs. Because death is the end of all that we have here – at least for us. Consequently, some will even go to extraordinary lengths to keep themselves – or loved ones – alive in a hospital setting. As a result, patients must now have an “Advanced Directive” prepared before any surgery will be undertaken.

Our human bodies are simply not built to live forever. We age and grow older. We are subject to accident, sickness, and disease. Eventually, at some moment, life here will end for every one of us – For there is no escape from physical death.

However, we were created with more than a body. We also have a soul, created by God. And this soul will transcend our physical death and live forever because it is immortal. This knowledge should give all of us hope and a sense of wonder.

Unfortunately, people didn't always know this, or believe this was possible. For them, death was truly the end. They could, at best, live in the memory of others – or, perhaps, in a monument erected on their behalf.

The prophet Ezekiel wrote for the exiled people in Babylon who had no hope. They knew nothing about a life after death. Yet, God revealed, through Ezekiel, that there would be a resurrection, someday. They would rise from their graves and be enlivened by the Spirit of God. They would have life in a new homeland that exceeded even their wildest dreams of restoration!

One of the reasons that God sent Jesus into the world was to make it clear that we could live forever beyond our life here. God sent His Son to reveal His goodness, His love, and His mercy. Jesus also made it clear that death was not the end.

Indeed, if we lived truly godly lives – if we embraced the Gospel – if we entered into a relationship with Jesus – then, after our life here, we could live forever in the presence of God. This would be in a state of eternal joy, and bliss, and love!

The raising of Lazarus was not a true resurrection. Lazarus would, someday, undergo death again. But the miracle was a sign of things to come. Moreover, it gave credibility to the teachings of Jesus – It brought many doubters to belief – And it made the enemies of Jesus more resolved to destroy him!

However, we must do more than merely believe in Jesus – We must also transform our lives to live up to what his commandments require and demand!

We cannot live by the “flesh” of which St. Paul speaks in today’s New Testament reading. Not at all! Instead, we must live by the “spirit”. By “flesh”, St. Paul means all those things which deflect us from our orientation to God. “Flesh” is much more than eroticism. It is anything of the material order that leads us to be selfish and self-serving. This includes pride, greed, lust, anger, sloth, envy, and scandal. All these things dehumanize us and keep us from being the child of God whom He created for so much more!

Brothers and Sisters, if we live in the “spirit”, then the Holy Spirit of God will possess us and direct all that we do. If we live in the spirit, we become one with the Holy Spirit and are truly brothers and sisters of Jesus, himself. And, as such, we are co-heirs with him in the Kingdom of Heaven wherein we will live after our own resurrection whenever that day comes.

So, we need not fear death. Death is never the end of life. We can live each day in hope for something more – something infinitely more! Consequently, let us pray, that we are up to this great calling – and that God will grace us with whatever we need to fulfill it!

Amen.

March 29, 2020

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