

HOMILY FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

-The last two weeks of Lent are in Passiontide. A couple of years ago, Abbot Mark expressed it well; saying that the first four weeks of Lent focus more on us-our fallen wounded human condition. The last two weeks focus more on Christ's response to our need.

-Today the first reading is from Ezekiel. He was a prophet living with the exiles in Babylon. He tells the people that God will open their graves, raise them up from their graves, and bring them home to the land of Israel. He will put His spirit within them and they will live. He will place them in their own land and they will know that the Lord is the true living God and that He has spoke and has done this.

-When Ezekiel speaks about opening graves and rising from the grave, he is using a Prophetic Parable.

-Today's Gospel finds Jesus literally putting that same Prophetic Parable into action. The tell Him

that his friend Lazarus is sick. Jesus does nothing. He only says that this illness is not unto death. But it is for the Glory of God, and that the Son of God may be glorified. He waits for two days; on the third day Jesus tells His disciples that they are going to wake Lazarus from sleep. The object, saying that if he is only sleeping he will recover. Jesus tells them plainly that Lazarus is dead.

-Martha meets Jesus and says, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus answers, "I am the Resurrection and Life." He then asked Martha if she believed this. Martha makes a profession of faith as strong as Peter did. "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." Jesus asks where they have laid Lazarus. They say, "Come and see." Jesus is deeply moved and he weeps. He says, "Take away the stone." Martha says that Lazarus has been dead for four days, so there will be an odor. "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, then you will see the Glory of God?" asks Jesus.

-They opened the grave, and Jesus calls out loudly, "Lazarus, come out!" He then called out "Unbind him and let him go!" At that point Lazarus is restored to his home and sisters. Many who saw what Jesus did, believed in him.

-This is a Prophetic Parable in action. It both literally fulfills Ezekiel's prophecy and it points

symbolically to a further meaning. This foreshadows Our Lord's own death, burial and his Resurrection.

-Holy Mother, the church has St. Paul explain to us in today's second reading what all of this means for us today. Paul says that those who live only on the level of our fallen wounded human nature, cannot please God. If they do not have the Spirit of God dwelling within them, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, though your body will die because of sin, your soul will live because of His righteousness. If the Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead is dwelling within you, He will also raise your bodies from the dead. St. Paul is not speaking symbolically. Our souls are literally alive with an adopted share in Christ's risen divine life, and God will literally raise our bodies from the dead, like Christ did. So let us follow Him more closely in these two weeks of Passiontide in prayer and Christian conversion, in order to share more fully in the Paschal Mystery of Our Lord Jesus Passion, Death, Resurrection, and the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

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