

## Message for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

I begin with the sad news that the closing of our parishes and the difficult journey of these past two weeks will continue at least through Easter. Bishop Brennan announced this on Wednesday afternoon. It appears that our Lenten sacrifices will carry on into at least the beginning of the Easter season. This will be a challenge, but I encourage you to continue the journey in faith. Strengthen your homes with time for family prayer and devotionals such as the Rosary and the Way of the Cross. Watch the Mass on TV each Sunday and even daily if possible. Make daily Spiritual Communions. Avail yourselves of the resources at Formed.org. God is present and we are being invited to recognize this truth through new and diverse means.

The readings for this Sunday speak to us of the power of the resurrection and the life that we have in Jesus. Jesus is our hope for eternal life, but He is also ever present to sustain us in our earthly life as well. As we hear of being raised from the grave, we can reflect on the many metaphorical graves that we experience in the course of our life and the many and varied ways that Jesus opens those graves and calls us to come out and be renewed in His love and mercy.

Ezekiel prophesied about the day when the Lord would open the graves and raise up the people. This prophecy certainly looked to Jesus and the resurrection we look forward to when He comes in His glory. But for the people of Israel that heard these words, it was not merely comfort in the hope of what would transpire centuries in the future. It was a present hope for a people in exile, stranded in Babylon and longing to return to the land of Israel.

In the gospel we are told of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, the last of the great “signs” that Jesus does in John’s gospel that both show that He is indeed the eternally begotten Son of the Father and points to the Paschal Mystery of His passion, death and resurrection. Jesus intentionally waits before going to Bethany and upon His arrival, Lazarus has been dead and in the tomb for four days. This is important.

In Jewish burial there was an outer room and an inner room in a tomb. The body would be placed in the outer room for three days and then prepared and moved to the inner tomb. After three days the body would have begun to decay and the death of the person certain beyond any doubt. By waiting, Jesus clearly raises a dead Lazarus to a restoration of life.

This delay no doubt caused Martha and Mary added grief and suffering. Jesus certainly didn’t want Martha and Mary to suffer, but allowed it that a greater truth, a greater gift, could come to fruition.

In this challenging Lent, we can certainly relate to the people of Israel in the days of Ezekiel. We too are a people in exile, stranded from the places we long to be. Children are at home, exiled from their friends and teachers at school. Workers are exiled from work with loss of pay and some having been laid off. We are exiled from loved ones quarantined because they are sick or because they are vulnerable and trying to stay well. And we are all exiled from our community of faith, our brother and sisters in Christ. We are exiled from our shared worship and the Eucharist, the Bread of Life.

Still, like the people of Israel we are to find hope in the prophecy of Ezekiel. God will open this grave and we will rise from it. We, like Martha and Mary, are called to believe in Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. Yes, we are experiencing a death at this time, but we will live. Jesus' delay in coming to Bethany brought forth "the glory of God" and a greater hope and realization of the power of God in the people. We can be certain that God can and WILL do the same for us.

I miss you all! You are in my daily prayers. I look forward to the renewal of full activity within our parish and the day we will celebrate the resurrection as we worship together around the altar of our Lord.

In Christ, Fr. Robert

## **SOME RESOURCES**

### **Spiritual Communion**

While we are separated from the celebration of Mass and the receiving of Holy Eucharist, I encourage you to make a Spiritual Communion. This can be done daily, but is especially appropriate on Sunday.

#### **Spiritual Communion Prayer**

My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.

I love you above all things and I desire to receive you in my soul.

Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,

Come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace you as if you were already there

And unite myself wholly to you.

Never permit me to be separated from you.

Amen.

### **Catholic Television**

Watch KNXT Channel 49 and/or EWTN for TV Mass and devotionals throughout the day.

The full schedule for Mass and other devotional programs on KNXT can be found at:

[dioceseoffresno.org/devotional-programming/](http://dioceseoffresno.org/devotional-programming/)

Live streaming of KNXT programming can be found at:

<http://knxt.tv/live/>

### **Formed**

Go to Formed.org then:

1. Click on "Sign Up"
2. Select "I Belong to a Parish or Organization"
3. Type in the parish zip code "93612" and select Our Lady of Perpetual Help
4. Enter your email and you're in!