

Fifth Sunday of Lent (A) – Scrutiny – “Your Brother will Rise.”

Ascension press has a series called “The Search”, the series speaks of our purpose, mission, journey and how we are all searching for something. Something that impacted me in the series was how it started, in the first episode, there is a scene in a cemetery where dirt is being thrown on a grave, and the narrator states “we are all going to die”. I know not the most uplifting message for our elect. Patrick Madrid once said that our life is like a sand hourglass where we have so many grains of sand assigned to our earthly life, but we do not know how many there are.

We can all identify with the fact that death is a reality and that at certain point we will all have to deal with it. Most of us have experienced the loss of a loved one, a spouse, a parent, a grandparent, a child, a friend. I dare to say that we can all agree that death sucks, so much so that our Lord became one of us to battle it, to remove the fear of it, to eliminate it. **What if you had a friend that had the ability to restore your loved one to life, would you ask them to restore your loved one’s life?**

In the gospel we find the story of Jesus with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Martha and Mary’s brother Lazarus is ill, and the sisters are worried. They send word to Jesus, he arrives, yet when he arrives Lazarus has been dead for four days. The four days is significant as for our Jewish brothers and sisters, when a person has been dead for four days, there is no question about their death as they started to decompose. One line that really gets my attention is the desperation of Mary and Martha as they both tell Jesus at different times **“Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died”** Jesus replied to Martha, **“your brother will rise”**, it strikes me because Martha and Mary had the same sentiment and they both had such great faith in Jesus, that they knew that he had the power to prevent Lazarus’s death.

*Today you are Martha and Mary, your loved one has died... you go to Jesus, and you tell him “Lord if you had been here my sibling, parent, grandparent, child, friend... Would not have died” his answer to you is... **“Your sibling, parent, grandparent, child, friend will rise”** and you might wonder how?*

In the book of the Prophet Ezequiel, we hear that the Lord will open the graves and we will rise from them. He states that he will put his spirit in us so that we may live and settle upon the land. The prophet was giving us a foretaste of our Lord’s promise to us, he was telling us that there will be a day when the graves will open and we will all rise, it is a prophecy of the second coming when, if we are dead or

alive we will reunite with the Lord, but it is also a prophecy of baptism. It states that he will put his spirit in us so that we can live and settle the land. Baptism is that mechanism that the Lord has gifted us, so that we can be cleansed, we can receive the Holy Spirit and become children of God, by which our inheritance becomes the land known as the heavenly kingdom.

Our Lord came specifically to end death, to release us of that fear and he gave us a promise. One of the verses before the gospel reading from the book of John expresses Jesus's words to us, **"I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will never die"**. With his resurrection, our Lord defeated death, our Easter celebration is precisely us declaring that our Lord has triumphed, that because of it, in baptism we die to our old self, but we are lifted as a new creature, and even if we physically die, we will never die because we believe in eternity. Saint Paul expressed it best in the letter to the Romans **"if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit dwelling in you"**.

Our elect are going to undergo their third scrutiny today and as they continue the discernment... three weeks ago, we were all challenged to reflect on our thirst physical and spiritual with the Women at the Well, two weeks ago we were all challenged to reflect on our physical and spiritual blindness with the story of the Man born Blind and today our Lord is challenging us to reflect on our physical and spiritual death with the story of Lazarus. Our Lord loves us so much that he became one of us, to give us the fountain of living water, to show us the way, give us his light and finally to assure us that he is the resurrection and that if we believe in him his spirit will grant us eternal life. We might all be gone physically someday but we have faith and hope that along with all our loved ones who have died physically, we will all rise again, participate, and enjoy God's promise of eternal life. **As we join the table of our Lord, let us continue to pray for our elect's journey as we place our own journey, our faith, our hope, all our loved ones in God's mercy, and his promise to us, so that we can truly experience and see... "how he loved them" and how much he loves us.**