**“From death into Life”**

All our readings point us to how our lives goes from death into life. As we live our lives in this world, we have the constant ticking of inevitable presence of dying one day. However, there are two types of death, death in this life and eternal death. It is a common saying that we all want to go to heaven but we do not want to die. Death, is a phenomenon that scares most of us. Probably, one of the reason why we are scared of death is that when God created humans, we were created not to die, so, it in our DNA. God did not create death. Death came into the world because of the sin of our first parents. God allowed death into the world so that we might sin no more.

While our death on earth means our present bodily death and it applies to everyone. Eternal death on the other hand, means being separated from God for eternity. This will only happen to those who did not obey God’s commandments and who did not repent of their sins while on earth. It is a death no one should desire or even want to endure. Jesus warned us strongly in several places in Scripture to avoid going to hell. That is why Jesus said **“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenn.” (**Matt 5:29). (There is no remedy for this death after life on earth.) It means spending eternity in hell with the devil and his fallen angels.

However, we are created to spend eternity in heaven with God. We are created for life. Again, you can say there are two types of life. One is the life we have on earth and another in eternal life we will have in heaven. That is why, for those who desire to be saved, God in His mercy and love has brought us from death into life, through the Paschal mystery and resurrection of His only begotten Son. Jesus has opened the gates of heaven to us so we can enter into His Father’s joy. We should do everything we are supposed to do, so we can be brought from death into life, and be with Him in heaven for eternity. No amount of suffering on earth would be great enough for us to miss the joy of heaven.

In our first reading, from Prophet Ezekiel, we heard talking about dry bones of the dead coming to life. The vision experienced by Ezekiel happened in Babylon were the conquered Israelites were in despair and had no hope. They thought they had lost everything, their religious identity, land, temple, and Davidic kingdom. The people felt that the nation was as good as dead like the bones of corpses left on the battle field to rot and dry in the sun. We can say, there is nothing deader than dry bones. Through Prophet Ezekiel God promised them, a new spirit and a new life not just for the people, but for all nations as well. This prophecy is a way of God asking us to have faith and have trust Him.

The words of God spoken through His Prophet Ezekiel was of hope. It could be applied to the graves we dig for ourselves by sinning. God promised forgiveness of our sins when we repent. The promise could also be applied to our resurrection from the dead. It is a symbol that we and Israel will be freed from bondage and restored to freedom and new life. This passage makes us think about Christian doctrine of resurrection, nor is it unrelated to the doctrine. It is at the resurrection on the last day that the full effect of God’s promise would be realized for everyone who has faith in Him. It is a fact that we will die, but we also believe that, though we will be as dead as dry bones, as believers, the promise of God about our resurrection to life is assured.

In our second reading, from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans, Paul preached about flesh and spirit. In our daily lives we are constantly struggling between the flesh and the spirit. The flesh Paul is talking about does not mean human body, but the condition of a human person turned in upon himself or herself in selfishness, a spiritual narcissism, an abject egoism. It is like a person when cold and shivering and there is no fire or warm clothing to warm the person up, could only wrap his or her arms around herself or himself. It is a picture of being in misery. If the person does not change, it would lead to eternal death.

Sin is the expression of a person who has wrapped their arms around themselves. In contrast, is the person who lives according to the spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit. Quite often in Scripture, the Holy Spirit is symbolized by fire, which gives both light and heat. The work of the Spirit is to give us the light of wisdom and the warmth of His love. With the power of the Spirit within us, we no longer need to wrap our arms around ourselves in selfishness. Instead, we can open our arms to embrace God and our neighbor in pure love. When we do this, we exhibit heavenly wisdom which is the right way to live. Even if we die, He who raised Christ from the dead, will bring our bodies to life.

Two weeks ago, in our Gospel reading, Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah to a Gentile woman after telling her, about her history with men. Last Sunday, Jesus first healed a man born blind of his physical blindness and later found him and revealed Himself as the **“Son of Man”** thereby, on his believing, healing him of his spiritual blindness as well. This week, Jesus raised Lazarus from death into life. On finding out that Lazarus was ill and dying, Jesus said the illness of Lazarus would not end in death but his illness happened so that His glory as the Son of God would be made manifest. While last week, Jesus said the reason the man was born blind was, **“so that the works of God might be made visible through him.”**

Jesus waited another 2 days before setting out to go and comfort Lazarus’ sisters and raise Lazarus back to life from death after he was in the tomb for 4 days, On getting to Bethany, Jesus showed both His two natures. In His human nature, Jesus cried with the people. In His divine nature, He showed the awesome power of God by raising Lazarus from death back to life. In crying over the death of Lazarus, Jesus suffered like us when we lose our loved ones. In raising Lazarus back to life, Jesus showed His power over death. We are told that the crowd began to believe in Him. It seems when we believe in God, we will be able to bear our suffering knowing our suffering would turn into dancing in the life to come.

When we think of Jesus Himself in His act of sacrifice. Even in the moment of great suffering, He opened His arms on the cross in a gesture of love for His Father and all of humanity, God the Father responded to His love by raising Him from the dead. In the words of St. Paul to us, **“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.”**

As we come with utmost reverence to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask Jesus for more grace to be able to bear our suffering so we can suffer no more in the next life.