

Fifth Sunday of Lent

March 9, 2008

Ezekiel 37:12-14; Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45

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Nothing is too dead for God! That seems to be the key message of the readings. Both the Hebrews and the family of Lazarus were challenged to believe that this is true. Against all evidence to the contrary—people not just dead, but already buried--God can raise up those who believe. What a consolation!

This gives me hope when I feel that parts of me have died through suffering, loss, hurt, sin, weakness, or limitations. It is so easy to think that I am in a hopeless situation when things go wrong in life, when relationships are lost or go awry. I can feel that life has been sucked out of me, that I have nothing left to live for. I have known several people who have committed suicide because they felt this way! But Jesus gives us reason to hope! ***Nothing is too dead for God!*** No part of me is too dead that God cannot breathe life into it, into me and bring me back to life!

“I am the resurrection and the life!” Jesus promises life to all who believe in him, “more” life than we can imagine, “resurrected” life! Perhaps this is what St. Paul means by saying that we are not in the flesh but rather in the spirit, if God dwells in us. Our life is not limited by human definitions. Pain and suffering cannot destroy the life that Christ has promised to those who believe in him. This is good news!

I know people like this, don't you. No matter what happens to them, their spirit, the Spirit of Christ in them, is able to bring life where there seems to be only death and devastation. They are able to respond to Jesus as did his other friend, when Jesus said, "Lazarus, come out!" Sometimes we are so stuck in the pain, the fear, the horror of the situation we are in, that we either would rather stay in the cave of suffering or are unable to hear him call us forth. It may take time to respond to his invitation, but it doesn't matter. He is waiting for us, calling us into renewed life, life that can be made more meaningful because of the suffering rather than in spite of it! You can bet life meant much more to Lazarus after this experience than it did before! ***Nothing is too dead for God!*** He must have celebrated this truth for the rest of his life.

Another interesting detail of this story is that it was the family and friends of Lazarus who sought out Jesus and that Jesus asked to untie him. Sometimes when we are in the depths of pain, we are not able to cry out for ourselves, paralyzed by what we are experiencing. I remember that kind of pain when my father died. I was numb! I couldn't "pray," though I know in hindsight that was prayer--God and I were communicating in the silence. My sisters and friends sustained me during those days, expressing in tangible ways the nearness of God. They were asking Jesus to "heal" me, to bring me back to life. And it was they who helped untie me from the pain, who gently supported me and walked with me until I was free enough to walk on my own.

Is there something in your life right now that feels dead? or are you stuck deep in a cave of pain? May you hear the voice of Jesus calling you back to life, resurrected life. May you recognize the loved ones who are the signs of God's love for you, inviting you into life. Look for them, they are there, for...***Nothing is too dead for God!***