Reflections for the 5th Sunday of Lent

On This 5th week in Lent the scripture readings are a vivid description of how GOD transforms what is lifeless. This is indeed a message of hope for us in this most difficult time for all of us in the world, in our country and around us. In the first reading of today, Ezekiel tells the exiles—dead in heart and spirit—that GOD will open their graves, raise them, and put his life-giving spirit in them. It’s a message of hope: This maybe your “Friday”; your Sunday will come! In his vision, Ezekiel witnesses Israel’s return to the Promised Land.

In the second reading of this weekend St. Paul assures us that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and who dwells within us will give life to our mortal bodies. In the gospel we see a scene with which all of us are familiar, namely, people weeping over the death of a loved one. Jesus is at the center of that scene. He gives hope to those who are surrounded by the shadows of death. He tells Martha that he is the resurrection and the life. He, then, raises the dead Lazarus to life. Our GOD - does not intervene every time to remove pain, suffering and death, but He is with us amid our suffering; JESUS wept at the death of his friend Lazarus (John 11:33-35). HE gives us life. GOD gives individuals and communities new life.

The inevitability of death keeps our species ill at ease, if not in despair. In Christ we have been given the bright hope of resurrection. This good news relates to more than our physical death. Resurrection is intended for this life too. Christ calls us to
“come forth” from all our tombs to the abundant life he offers. “Roll away the stone, unbind him and let him go.” There are so many dark areas in our lives. Jesus asks us today to seek his help and that of the community around us to loosen those chains and come out of tombs of our own creation. If we want Jesus to visit the dark dungeons of our life, we need to ask Jesus to bring the light and power of His Holy Spirit into our personal lives and ask him to liberate us from our tombs. Let the story of the resurrection of Lazarus become our story! We are called to leave our graves of sin and unhappiness. As a Parish Community, we must stand before the world and accept the challenge to untie those who are bound and help them to come out from their self-made graves. Jesus calls each of us to come out of our graves and help others to do the same. God wants us to liberate us from whatever tombs hold us. “Lazarus, come forth.” He is calling us today, each one by our name as He called “Lazarus,”

We and the world are going through an experience that none of us ever felt or ever lived, before. We are entering into second week of “shelter in place order” since the rapid spread of this Pandemic. The suffering and death caused by this pandemic we see around the world and in our country probably makes most of us sad, discouraged, and question God. The inconveniences caused and jobs lost due to shelter in place makes us angry and restless. Churches closed for the celebration of the eucharist, prayers and services, make us feel lost and disheartened.

Yet in all of these looked from a different perspective, we see heroic witness and example of life- giving spirit, faith, hope, sacrifice, service, and sense of community all around the world. The best in us comes out of us in most difficult times and crises. This I see in the goodness of lot of people who risking their own lives are on the front lines offering support and help. The medical professionals
who treat and care the sick, civil authorities who take necessary steps for the safety of all and do everything possible to prevent the spread of this disease, the many people who work tirelessly in various essential services, many volunteers, faith organizations, and other charitable and social help organizations going the extra mile to extend a helping hand in varied ways to lift and support those in need are beautiful and inspiring examples of it. We are called and challenged today to engage in life giving activities. In what ways can I be in the coming days be a life giver to my brothers and sisters?

My dear brothers and sisters, this is a great message of hope for us in this difficult time. Let us give heed to God’s word and let us turn away from our sinful and selfish ways and come back to Him to enjoy the life and hope he offers us. May God bless and keep you safe and healthy in the coming weeks and months.