

Reading I - Ezekiel 37:12-14

Thus says the Lord GOD: O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and have you rise from them, O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the LORD. I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 R. (7) With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Reading II - Romans 8:8-11

Brothers and sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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.

Gospel - John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

The sisters of Lazarus sent word to Jesus, saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." He became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, He cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

Christus victor sic sum victor...

We, the baptized, can lose sight of the mission of the Church and instead grow to focus on what is secondary to its mission, and therefore ours. Priests, parish staff, parishioners can get so caught up in striving to make their parishes places of community, education, good works, and social life, that we forget our primary mission. Some of us are so focused on what the Church teaches, we lose sight of what's most important.

Friends and family might ask you, 'Why do you go to Church? What does faith offer you?' No doubt there are many good answers, but today's Gospel puts aside all the good and practical reasons to be Christian and reminds the catechumens and every one of us of the number one reason: eternal life with God. That's the answer our catechumens gave during the rite that accepted them as candidates for baptism and it must be the answer for all children of God.

This month a modern Saint who understood this, will be declared. [Blessed Carlo Acutis](#). In July another young man who was driven by this truth, will also be declared. [Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati](#). 10 years ago a young man named [Joseph Reali](#) died suddenly at the age of 25. Like Blessed Carlo and Pier Giorgio, he was a warrior for Christ, singularly devoted to the Eucharist, Mary, and Saints who inspired them to live lives of charity for the salvation of souls. I highly recommend learning more about and being inspired by these young men who lived life to the full and to the depths of their being, were set like flint on eternal life with God.

When was the last time you reflected on this, on your salvation and soul saving mission? Jesus promises you the one thing that matters more than everything else: *"Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."* *"If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies."* [Romans 8: 10-11](#)
The Church invites those preparing for baptism--and every one of us who are already baptized--to turn to the fundamentals of faith, and to do so with a sense of urgency and driving passion for salvation.

The image of Jesus as a kindly friend who makes me feel good when I'm feeling down, isn't without an element of truth. But we can't let that part of his identity blind us to the Jesus who was and is *Christus Victor* - Warrior. Jesus came to fight. In the Gospel of Luke's account of the nativity of Jesus he notes the appearance of the 'heavenly host' of Angels, translation... The Army of God! [Luke 2:13](#) He is a warrior doing battle with a great enemy of God and all that God creates and loves. Whose final victory is over death and its creator. It's easy to domesticate Jesus, presenting him as a kindly moral teacher. But that's not how the Gospels present him. He is a warrior who does battle with the forces of the enemy of God that keep us from being fully awake and alive.

The work of the enemy is evident in our history, going back to original sin. The myriad ways the enemy has seduced the chosen ones is displayed throughout the scriptures. Ezekial, in the first reading speaks to us of the promises God to save us from our slavery to sin and give us new life. He reminds us never to abandon the Lord like the Israelites and thus become hopeless. He says that even if the bones dry up and the breath is gone, if we obey the words of the Lord, He will put His spirit within us, and thus we shall live again. [Ezekiel 37:11-14](#) As long as we trust Him wholeheartedly, He can change our mortal body and resurrect us in the future to share His glory in eternal life. St. Paul reinforces for us that the best way to please God is to follow the spirit of God as warriors in the company of Christ instead of joining the rebellion of the enemy.

As this is the final Sunday of the three scrutinies the readings are directed at the Elect who begin their final journey led in spirit to the baptismal font where they will finally die to their rebellion against God and enter into new life, a new creation, a warrior on the front lines of the battle for the salvation of the world and empowered to be Holy. For those of us, who have already been baptized into the divine life of God and as such have become the children of God, warriors with Christ, we do well to reflect on these readings, on how much we have spiritually matured by the graces of God and are inspired to continue growing in our understanding of our sacredness. May we all, who accompany our brothers and sisters on this journey, renew our faith in the Son of God, who embraced our death, in order, by the power of his Resurrection, to bring us new and eternal life.

The Third Scrutiny therefore emphasizes Jesus as *“the Resurrection and the Life”* as we heard in the Gospel account of the raising to life of Lazarus. His rising is an anticipation of what is to take place on the last day for all who have remained in Christ. But as St. Paul said, those whose lives are embedded in the “flesh”, that is, those whose lives are given over to their instincts of greed and self-indulgence, can never be close to God. Meaning, as Jesus has said, *“the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of damnation.”* [John 5:28-29](#)

Jesus would not relent when the disciples tried to dissuade him from going to Judea. He let them know that fear and danger cannot be the deciding factors in his life and mission, that there are times for things to be done, tasks to be accomplished, missions to be carried out. Whatever the risks involved, they must be done and done now. We must, like Jesus, be set like flint on the completion of our part in the fulfillment of his mission as God’s own Son sent to hand over his life for the salvation of the world.

The Raising of Lazarus by Jesus really presents, in microcosm, that whole mystery we celebrate throughout Holy Week: that through, in and by Jesus, the Father destroys our chains of death forever. The story is the fulfillment of the prophecy from Ezekiel in the First Reading. A parable about Israel, dead in sin and idolatry, being brought back to life in God. In today’s gospel, Lazarus represents all those who are being brought back to life, life in God. He represents especially all those who are brought into new life by baptism, sharing the very life of God.

When we are full of that Spirit then we have truly risen with Christ for his life is truly active in us. We are both alive and life-giving. Those who are in the Spirit will want to put on the armor of God; the belt of Truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the Gospel of Peace, shield of faith, helmet of Salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Each piece of armor has a purpose and is a means of defense against temptation and evil. We must acquire and become skilled in the use of the higher virtues of faith, hope, and charity from which grow the virtues of justice, prudence, fortitude, and temperance. Then the words of Thomas, can be our own, *“Let us go, too, and die with him,”* expressing our call to be with Jesus all the way, even into his suffering and death.

A Warrior for Christ: <https://youtu.be/s3CJYINBhm4?feature=shared>

Reflection Questions

1. Consider the concept of "Christus Victor" as presented in the homily. How does understanding Jesus as a warrior impact a believer's perspective on their faith and their role in the world?
2. The homily emphasizes the "primary mission" of the Church. Consider what the author identifies as this primary mission and reflect on the potential dangers of focusing on secondary aspects of Church life.

3. Explore the significance of the Third Scrutiny in the journey of the Elect towards baptism, as highlighted in the readings. How do the themes of death, resurrection, and new life prepare them for this sacrament and their future as Christians?
4. Drawing from the scriptural references and the examples of Blessed Carlo Acutis, Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, and Joseph Reali, discuss what it means to live as a "warrior for Christ" in the modern world. What are some practical ways believers can embody this calling?
5. Analyze the relationship between the prophecy of Ezekiel regarding the resurrection of the dry bones and the Gospel account of the Raising of Lazarus as presented in the text. How do these passages illuminate the Christian understanding of salvation and eternal life?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Catechumens:** Individuals undergoing a period of instruction and spiritual formation in preparation for baptism in the Catholic Church.
- **Eucharist:** The sacrament of Holy Communion, in which Catholics believe they receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.
- **Grace:** The free and unmerited gift of God's favor, which enables humans to participate in the divine life.
- **Lent:** A 40-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in preparation for Easter in the Christian liturgical calendar.
- **Parish:** A defined territorial district within a diocese, with its own church and congregation, under the pastoral care of a priest.
- **Rite:** A religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.
- **Sacrament:** An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us.
- **Scrutiny (in this context):** One of three special liturgical rites celebrated during Lent for catechumens, intended to purify their hearts and minds in preparation for baptism.
- **Sin:** An offense against God as well as against reason, truth, and right conscience; a failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods.
- **Virtue:** A habitual and firm disposition to do good. The moral virtues are acquired by human effort; the theological virtues (faith, hope, charity) are infused by God.