

## **Fifth Sunday of Lent - Lectionary: 34**

### **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.

# JESUS WEPT: THE HEART OF THE SAVIOR AND THE PROMISE OF LIFE



## Summary

This homily synthesizes the theological themes and scriptural reflections associated with the Fifth Sunday of Lent. The central narrative—the raising of Lazarus—serves as a catalyst for a deeper exploration of the human condition, the devastating impact of original sin, and the restorative power of the Holy Spirit. The analysis identifies three critical takeaways:

The analysis identifies three critical takeaways:

1. **The Dual Nature of Christ's Grief:** Jesus' weeping is not merely an expression of empathy for his friends but a visceral, ontological groan against the dominion of death and the historical atrocities resulting from humanity's revolt against God.
2. **The Indwelling of the Spirit as Divinization:** Through the sacraments of initiation, believers receive sanctifying grace, becoming "sons in the Son" and literal temples of the Holy Spirit. This indwelling is the defining mark of belonging to Christ and is the mechanism for overcoming the "flesh."
3. **The Imperative of Reconciliation:** Because sanctifying grace is dynamic and can be lost through mortal sin, the Christian life requires constant vigilance and a "running" toward the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The survival of the soul is presented as infinitely more significant than the health of the physical body.

I want to zero in this week on two words in particular. These two of Jesus in the Gospel today have a direct connection to what we've been reflecting on these past three weeks, particularly the readings on the third and fourth Sundays of Lent in which there was an emphasis on the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. In particular, the role of the Holy Spirit in each of those sacraments and then drilling down even more into how the Holy Spirit is so essential to our lives as Christians. Essential first and foremost because it is by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that we receive sanctifying grace, become through baptism participants in the divine life, begin the process of growing in our sacredness, and our divinization, our becoming sons and daughters of God literally. We not only see the truths about our identity the past Sunday's readings, or in the readings today, but also at every Mass in which we participate. When the words of the priest are spoken as he pours a drop of water into the chalice of wine saying; *"by the mystery of this water and wine may we share in the divinity of Christ as he humbled himself to share in our humanity."*

Today we are moved to reflect more on the Sacrament of Reconciliation because these readings, whether directly or indirectly, imply or necessitate reconciliation with God and this connects to the deepest cause for Jesus to weep. Ultimately, the implication of deification in the life of a Christian disciple is a total reorientation of one's existence. By being transformed by grace, we become a "son in the Son," freed from the dominion of sin and death, and empowered to live a life of selfless, cruciform charity. It transforms our earthly life into a continuous preparation for our ultimate end: eternal participation in God, which alone can fulfill the deepest desires of the human heart.

Jesus' own emotional response to the suffering that surrounds him because of the death of Lazarus is certainly cause enough for Jesus to weep, even though he knows what he's about to do. The suffering around him is real and that concerns him because he loves them, so he is present to them in their grief. This situation in the Gospel bites at the heart of human fears regarding pain, suffering, and death. For anyone who cares about their life, concerns about the afterlife will ultimately seize hold of them. For the Christian, though we are taught that we ought not fear death itself, we do struggle with the potential pain and suffering that might occur in the manner of our death and, more importantly, where we will spend eternity. The depth of our concern with the question of our eternal rest increases as we age because the depth of our desire for God also increases, and we become much more conscious of our deep desire to spend eternity with God. Of course, there are all sorts of things that complicate this experience of the contemplation of our mortal lives in light of eternal life, but stripping those away leaves us to face the deepest truth about ourselves and God.

We know that though our bodies are mortal, and in our inmost being we know that our souls are immortal. We know there is an eternity of existence for us and through faith we know and can desire eternity in communion with our Creator. Eternity apart from the Trinity is, in a word, terrifying. Christian interpretation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Reading from Ezekiel speaks to our concerns. Going beyond the immediate meaning of salvation from exile for the Jews, it offers us a reassuring affirmation and turns our hearts toward confidence in God's love and mercy. By it we see the promise of the formation of a totally new people united by the Spirit of God and not by cultural or blood ties. We know this is us, the mystical body of Christ the Church. It is the community born of and animated by the Holy Spirit. This state reflects our grace fueled transformation, in which we become God's temple, indwelt by the Spirit through faith working in love: *"you are God's temple, and God's Spirit dwells in you"*.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus wept... there is greater depth to the grief that Jesus himself was feeling. His are tears over death itself. Tears over the entirety of the human condition due to original sin that transmitted a hereditary privation of sanctifying grace and its effects in their descendants down to all the folks surrounding him, Mary and Martha. This privation of grace, the loss of adoptive sonship and divine friendship, did not need to happen. Humanity wasn't destined to be left with concupiscence and disorder. We weren't made to suffer such things as rebellion of the lower powers against reason, body against soul, suffering and death.

Jesus wept. The people he encounters, mourning the death of Lazarus, manifest all the consequences of Original Sin and Jesus is perturbed. Aware that death was not God's original plan, but a result of humanity's revolt; aware of the suffering and dying of so many innocents ever since Abel and Cain; aware of the deaths of particular people like Lazarus whom He loved; aware that in due course, humanity would kill millions by warfare and murder, slavery, starvation and neglect, abortion and euthanasia. Aware too of his own impending passion and death. That the people he loved, the people he came to save, would put him to

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16

death, would revile him, would torture him, and would subject him to one of the worst ways for a human being to die.<sup>2</sup>

Christ is viscerally moved at the devastation wrought by sin and death. When the scripture says Jesus wept, it doesn't mean that there were tears falling from his face such as others were experiencing. It means that from the core of his being he groans deeply about the state of his creation. That this groaning welled up within him and was powerfully manifested. We know as well that this is not the life we were made for. This life of suffering and rebellion and self-service, of war and pestilence, of man's inhumanity to man. This we know in the depths of our being, is not okay. And so, we cry out like the psalmist. Out of the depths I call to you Lord. Lord hear my cry. We have all prayed these words in one form or another, desperate for the salvation of the moment, desperate for the end of the suffering, desperate for freedom from sin, desperate for reconciliation among ourselves, within ourselves, and with God. May your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. Lord, if you, Lord, keep account of sins, who could stand, but with you is forgiveness. Forgiveness I seek. I wait for the Lord. My soul waits and I hope for his word. How many of us have felt so deeply that sentiment? I wait for the word of the Lord to me. For the word in response to my prayer, to my cry. My soul looks for the Lord on that day more than the sentinels for daybreak. Let Israel hope in the Lord. Let me hope in you as you promised, Lord. For the Lord is mercy. Have mercy on me. Lord, have mercy. With you is redemption. You redeemed me from all my sins. Out of the depths of my being, I call to you, Lord. I cry out, "Save me."<sup>3</sup>

And the Lord answers. *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you."*<sup>4</sup> He pleads with us, do not sin against the Holy Spirit in you, the body which you have is a temple of the presence of God. Yes. He says mercy will be given. Yes. He says I love you enough to die for you. Yes. He says I will give you this spirit to abide in you to dwell in you. But please do not continue to be like those who have gone before you. You are no longer bound to sin. I freed you. You are no longer what Adam and Eve were. I have given you this sanctifying grace in a new, supernatural way. I have made you a new creation. Abide in me and I will abide in you.

Jesus speaks to all of this in the Gospel and St. Paul further explains in the second reading<sup>5</sup>, that baptized Christians, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, are no longer dominated by selfish, sinful desires ("the flesh") but are empowered by God to live a new, spiritual life. It highlights that God's presence in us is the defining mark of belonging to Christ. We are liberated from the forces of sin and death. At the cross God broke the power of sin<sup>6</sup>. We retain the flesh, but it is alien to our new being, which is life in the spirit, namely the new self, governed by the holy Spirit. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we are able to fulfill the divine will<sup>7</sup>. The same Spirit who enlivens us for holiness will also resurrect our bodies at the last day<sup>8</sup>. Christian life is therefore the experience of a constant challenge to put to death the evil deeds of the body through life of the spirit.<sup>9</sup> We, by reason of the Spirit's presence within us, enjoy not only new life but also a new relationship to God, that of adopted children and heirs through Christ, whose sufferings and glory they share.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mark 3:5; 10:14

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 130

<sup>4</sup> John. 14: 15 -17

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:9

<sup>6</sup> Romans 8:3

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:4

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:11

<sup>9</sup> Romans 8:13

<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:14-17

This baptism in which we have been baptized, we know as Paul says, is both a dying from our past and an entry into new life. That we are indeed a new creation. It's the beginning of the salvation we desire. That's the theme in the second reading today. Those who are in the spirit will want to give their whole selves to the higher instincts of truth, love, compassion, justice. When we are full of that spirit, if we listen to him and do what he says, if we cooperate, then we can say we have truly risen with Christ. For his life is truly active in us. Go and sin no more becomes our rally cry. Then we can be like him both alive and lifegiving. So that like Paul says, *"it is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me"*.<sup>11</sup>

And so, we preach a Gospel of Life and Love in the face of the ancient enemies of life and love. We profess and enact a deep reverence for every human being, for Christ joined them (us) in His incarnation, died for them (me) in His passion, and raises them (us) up to life eternal. We join Christ in His irritation and compassion, in His tears about anything that demeans the human person or threatens human flourishing, praying and acting for a world in which life and love are everywhere respected. Building a culture of life.

*"He who abides in love abides in God and God in him."*<sup>12</sup> Jesus wept. We are forgetful of these profound truths about who we are and what makes our lives different, the world we are called to help God transform. Lent is a time that reminds us of this forgetfulness and the eternal consequences. We are no less forgetful than the Israelites before us or the parade of God's struggling children since the death and resurrection of our savior. We fail to nurture and maintain this indwelling of the spirit of God which we have been warned is conditional. It's dynamic. We can lose it. And so, in these final weeks of Lent, we are called to ever more deeply, seriously, attentively reflect on the words of St. Paul and to take them to heart; that 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 have the closeness to God that they desire most deeply and above all else.

We must run, whenever this 'old man' in us, whenever the enemy confronts us; we must run the other way into the arms of God once again. Run to God for our protection and, if we have given in to sin, for our redemption, our reconciliation. Run to recapture the indwelling of the spirit when we lose it through mortal sin. Run to the sacrament of reconciliation, into the arms of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. This sanctifying grace that occurs through love, a habitual grace that we receive in our baptism, we must at all costs avoid losing it to sin. God will not abide iniquity.

Every time that we choose to reject sin and reject that which would lead us to be less in Christ, there is a sort of resurrection miracle present in our lives. Ultimately, any serious inner life in Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit and a gift of Christ Himself to us. Yet we must always do our part by cooperating, by seeking to choose that which helps us live this mystery of Christ more profoundly.

We would do well these last couple weeks to reflect on how much we have continued or not, to see this divine life, the infused virtues of faith, hope, and charity, the gifts of the Holy Spirit through baptism and confirmation; how much have we seen these grow or not. We ought to cry out like the psalmist once again for God's help, that we might always abide in him, that the spirit would never be taken away from us. We work hard and we pray for our physical health. We run to the doctor, and we look for all sorts of pills and things to heal us. How much more so, exponentially so, we should seek God when we have gone astray and the very life of God in us in our souls is at risk or lost. Rather my physical body suffer than my soul be lost to God. God went out of his way to make this easy for us.

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<sup>11</sup> Galatians 2:20

<sup>12</sup> 1 John 4:16

And Jesus wept, for each of us that we would have to suffer these difficulties because of original sin and because we so often and so easily reject the power he gives us to go and sin no more.

### Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Definition
<b>Concupiscence</b>	The disorder of human appetites and the rebellion of lower powers (passions) against reason, resulting from original sin.
<b>Divinization</b>	The process by which a Christian becomes a participant in the divine life and a son or daughter of God through the grace of the Holy Spirit.
<b>Habitual Grace</b>	Another term for sanctifying grace received at baptism; a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul.
<b>Indwelling</b>	The presence of the Holy Spirit within the believer, making their body a "temple" of God.
<b>Mortal Sin</b>	A serious offense against God that causes the loss of sanctifying grace and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
<b>Mystical Body of Christ</b>	The community of believers (the Church) who are born of and animated by the Holy Spirit rather than cultural or blood ties.
<b>Original Sin</b>	The hereditary privation of sanctifying grace transmitted to all humans, resulting in a wounded nature subject to ignorance, suffering, and death.
<b>Preternatural Gifts</b>	Gifts such as bodily immortality and perfect body-soul harmony that Adam and Eve possessed before original sin.
<b>Sanctifying Grace</b>	The supernatural life and divine friendship granted by God that transforms the human person and allows for participation in God's nature.
<b>The Flesh</b>	A term used by St. Paul to describe a life dominated by selfish, sinful desires and the "old man" instincts of greed and self-indulgence.