Fifth Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Psalm 130

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45

This Wednesday is going to be special. The Family gathers for the meal as usual but after supper the Lenten tradition continues with the coloring of Easter eggs with my brother Dave’s grandson, Mason age 8 and his cousin, Braydon, age 6 as featured artists.

Today I would like to explore the ‘egg’ in the context of today’s readings.

As you know the egg became a traditional part of Easter. When we bless the Easter baskets of the Easter foods on Holy Saturday afternoon, there are usually eggs to be blest. Eggs symbolize the tomb of Jesus which is cracked open to reveal life giving sustenance. The food coloring on the outside of the egg signifies the joy that will be forthcoming when the egg (the tomb) is opened. The tomb is not to be feared because, with the power of the Resurrection, the tomb cannot contain the life that is within.

Let’s look at the first reading from Ezekiel. This prophet of God wants to share God’s message of hope. The People of God are as good as dead. They have been taken away from their homes and churches and are enslaved in the land of Babylon. The prophet speaks, “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.” The prophet encourages God’s people to have hope because they are His People and God has promised to release them from their grave of slavery.

Sometimes we let the world entomb us. It tries to kill the spirit with discouragement, depression, PTSD, psychological terror or physical impairment. The walls can become so thick that the words of the prophet become fainter and fainter. It is imperative that we do all that we can to revive the spirit within us with meditation and prayer. After all we are God’s people. His spirit resides in us and it is more powerful than the walls that entomb us. Maybe we need to talk to someone who is willing to share their spirit of life with us to encourage the spirit within us – a professional counselor, a family member, a parishioner, a friend, a minister of God’s love and life. With help, we can have a breakout moment, and the tomb we find ourselves in can crack and give way.

Our Psalm reminds us that with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption. If we entomb ourselves with sin and vice, we can suffocate. We have to use this gift of Lent to remind ourselves that the Lord is kindness and forgiveness and redemption. So out of the depths we can cry out to the Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Mercy. The Lord will hear our voice and of we are attentive we can hear the voice of the Lord, through the voice of the priest in the confessional, that we can come out of our tomb because our sins and iniquities are forgiven.

Brothers and sisters: those who are in the flesh cannot please God, so says Saint Paul to the Romans. We build a wall of selfishness, and greed, and vanity, and vengeance so much so that the spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead is walled out. On the contrary, if we are in the spirit and allow the Spirit of Christ to dwell within us, we can be raised from the dullness and death with which we surround ourselves. We must allow the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwell within us through prayer and righteous living.

Can we sinners be raised from the dead? Can we break out of our tombs and live life as we should? Who has the power to raise us? Who has the power to bring us out of our graves? Jesus. Want proof?

Listen to the story given to us from the Gospel of John. People told Jesus his friend Lazarus was dead. Jesus says, “Uh nuh. He’s sleeping and I’m going to awaken him.” Jesus’ friends said: Okay if he is just asleep, let’s go wake him up. Jesus wasn’t perturbed that his friends couldn’t see clearly what Jesus was getting at so Jesus told them point-blank that his friend was really dead. They all went to Bethany to the house of Martha and Mary, Lazarus’ grieving sisters. Seeing his friends upset, Jesus gets upset too.

Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus and said, ”Take away the stone.” Now Martha said that Lazarus was really, really, really, dead. Jesus said to her and to us, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” To prove his point, Jesus called out in a loud voice, (Now I’m going to do an imitation of Frank Ryuneon whose presentation we enjoyed at St. Martha’s), “Lazarus, come out!”

Now I hope that is proof enough for you that our God loves us so much that he can break us out any tomb in which we find ourselves whether imposed or self-imposed. Jesus tells us, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and anyone who lives and believes in me will never die. **Do you believe this?”**