Commentary on the Readings for March 29, 2020
The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Today's Readings have some spectacular scenes. Often we are so taken in by the details of such scenes that we fail to step back and comprehend their meaning. So take a moment to relax and listen carefully to the message of these readings.

The **First Reading** is from the ***Book of the Prophet Ezekiel (37:12-14)***. At the time of this story, the people of Israel are captives in Babylon, languishing as if they were "dry bones in the desert." Through this vision of the dry bones, God tells the Prophet to announce that He will in time restore the exiled people of Judah. This will not be a return to their former status and shame under the Monarchy, but to a new life governed not by kings and princes but by the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. So, when you feel "down" or depressed, call on the Holy Spirit. He is within all who are baptized and waiting for our call.

The **Responsorial Psalm** ***(130:1-8)*** is one of the seven penitential Psalms used in various liturgies. In it, the psalmist begs for God's mercy and forgiveness of his sins. At the same time, this is an instruction to all the People of God to wait patiently in hope for the Lord's redemption.

The **Second Reading** is from ***St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (8:8-11)***. Paul gives the Romans and all of us an updated teaching similar to that of the Prophet Ezekiel above. "Updated" because this writing comes from a time after Christ's Resurrection and the Holy Spirit has been poured out on all mankind to guide us back to the Father. If we do not have the Spirit dwelling within us, we will be like those "dry bones in the desert." So "ask and you shall receive!"

The **Gospel Reading** is from the ***Gospel of John (11:1-45)***. Here we have an extensive teaching by Jesus but it is buried in a long story, one that everyone has heard many times. We are all captivated by the spectacular story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and rightly so. However, this is not the essence of this Gospel message. The real message is Jesus' statement, ***"I am the resurrection and the life,"*** etc. Through this story and His statement, Jesus is telling all mankind that He is in control of both physical and spiritual life and we only need to have His Holy Spirit dwelling within us, guiding us, to partake of His resurrection. ***"Do you believe this?"*** Can you respond with the same answer as Martha did?

Throughout the season of Lent we have several vivid stories in the Gospel of John depicting the Gift of Eternal Life through our belief in Jesus: Rebirth in the story of Nicodemus (John 3), **Living Water** in the story of the Samaritan Woman (John 4), **Life Giving Word** in the cure of the Centurion's son (John 5), and, most of all, the **Bread of Life** in (John 6). So, if you missed the point of any of these readings, now would be a good time to go back and get acquainted with the real message behind the story. Something to think about during your prayer time this week!

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