

A man was surprised to read the announcement of his own death in the obituary column of the local newspaper. Ringing up his close friend, he enquired, "Did you see the announcement of my death in the paper this morning?" "Yes," was the frightened answer in a shivering voice. "But where are you speaking from? Heaven or Hell?"

Dear Friends,

We are all home with the situation of Covid 19. I wish you all a safe and healthy stay at your home. This situation, the readings ask us to reflect about death and resurrection and a new life. There is always a question about the problem of suffering and evil.

It was a promise to give a new life to the people of Israel. The first reading prophet Ezekiel had a dream about the dry bones and they had become the live ones. God has been so gracious towards the Israel people throughout their life. Every time wherever they would go, God was with them to give a new life and circumstance. The imagery told in the first reading took us to the battle field of Babylonian captivity, where the soldiers uprooted some of God's people and dragged them into slavery in Babylon.

In His vision, the release of the Jews from the captivity and slavery of Babylon is described as a rising from their graves to return to a new life in their own homeland. Through the prophet, God assures the exiles that they will live again. They will be raised from death and filled with life. They will experience new life, life that springs from God's own Spirit.

In the second reading St. Paul assures of the new life to the Christians by the death and resurrection of Jesus Himself. It will be happening by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul advises the Roman Christians, and us, to allow the Holy Spirit who dwells in them to renew and sanctify them, thus making them eligible for resurrection. "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." The Spirit-filled life is a life of intimacy with God. In this passage, Paul stresses the empowering action of God the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel, we read the story of Lazarus raised from death. If you read it deeply, it gives us some realization of God and the world. The following question is the question that hammers our minds all the time. How can there be an all loving and all powerful God if there is so much suffering or evil in the world?

The simple answer that I realized was which I have been repeating God has given the freedom to choose. I quote Fr. Ron Rolheiser words, "God gives us freedom and (unlike most everyone else) refuses to violate it, even when it would seem beneficial to do so.

That leaves us in a lot of pain at times, but, as Jesus reveals, God is not so much a rescuing God as a redeeming one. God does not protect us from pain, but instead enters it and ultimately redeems it. There are two identical phrases in the Gospel one from Mary another from Martha, which express all our concern. First, one is like us asking where were you. The other one from Mary comes with deeper trust in the Lord.

Jesus tells us that he will give us a new life from everything when we have more faith and trust in him. Whatever we face on earth, God is with us to help us come out of that. He is the redeemer. He gave his own life for us to show that he will bring new life to everyone. Jesus in the gospel tells us that if we believe in him, we will see the glory of God. Jesus did this miracle of raising Lazarus for three reasons.

1). By raising, He wanted to prove that He was from God, the son of man will be glorified through it (verse 2).

2). To make the faith of the disciples stronger. (verses 14-15). In the same way to make the faith of the community stronger (verse 31) and many believed in Jesus. (verse 42)

3). By raising, He got the condemnation and death, by giving His own life, He made us live a new life. Martha confessed Him, "You are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." (verse 27)

Let us try to put our faith in him. We will have a new life every day and forever.

### **Additional Joke to laugh:**

Three friends were discussing death and one of them asked: "What would you like people to say about you at your wake service while your dead body in the coffin is visible to everyone?" The first of the friends said: "I would like them to say, he was a great humanitarian who cared about his community." The second said: "He was a great husband and father who was an example for many to follow." The third friend said, "I would like them to say, 'Look, he's moving in the coffin!!'"