

Dear Friends,

As we get closer to Easter, we hear more about new life. The spring brings new life to us after the cold winter. The leaves are budding. This growth gives us new vibes to our daily life. The readings bring new vibes to our faith.

The first reading from the book of the prophet Ezekiel brings new life to us. This chapter contains the visions and oracles of the prophet Ezekiel who ministered to the people of Judah during the exile. The Babylonian empire led by Nebuchadnezzar took control of Judah and its king, because they failed to pay tribute to them. The Babylonians waged a war twice to the people of Judah. The first time they took the leaders from Judah to Babylon. The second time they destroyed the whole city of Jerusalem, the Jerusalem temple, and the people at large. Prophet Ezekiel was taken the first time with the king.

It was a terrible time for the people of Judah, not unlike the war between Russia and the Ukraine, or other wars in other countries. It will take years to rebuild the country. We can realize how much damage has been done to the places and people. People lost their hope of their land and their lives. I have some experience working with Sri Lankan refugees who came and stayed in our state during the civil war in Sri-Lanka. It is very pathetic how they were treated by the officials. It was sad to hear all their stories. They always believed they would go back to their land. The same way I have experience in talking with people after Tsunami. I worked in a small village where they lost 220 children and a lot of adults.

Ezekiel, through his vision gives hope and new life to people. He saw dry bones in every direction. God told him to prophesy and give life. The breath came and they received life. This is compared to the people of Israel, as they were like dry bones and got a promise of a new life.

The second reading talks about the glory of resurrection which is eternal when we have the spirit of Christ in us. The Gospel talks about death into life, the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus' friend.

For our reflections:

1) God will never abandon his people; Ezekiel like other early prophets thought the people were punished like this because of their abandonment and unfaithfulness of God in their lives. Once people repent, God made covenant with them every time. God will never abandon anyone of us, even if you are the only one in this world. I can quote two examples from the scripture. Abraham implored for the people of Sodom (Genesis 18: 16-33) Moses implored for the people of Israel (Exodus 32:7-14).

2) God will restore and give new life to those who trust in him. We have a lot of examples from scripture where people who trust in God got their lives back. Today's Gospel is a good witness. The person sat at the pool for thirty-eight years. The healing of the paralytic (Mark 2: 1-12), St. Paul says that we all will have a new life, not because we earned it, rather God has freely given to us when we believe in him. Read (Romans 5: 1-11) he loves us, and we become his adopted sons and daughters. Jesus said to Lazarus, come out.

Come out and have a deeper relationship with God to get new life in our faith. Lent is the proper season to encounter God and Jesus in our lives.