

SPIRITUAL LIFE

5th Sunday of Lent

By: Fr. Chris

Time can be difficult, especially if we are waiting for something. It is even more difficult if we are waiting for God. I've always wondered about the two days that Jesus waited before heading to Bethany. He heard about his beloved friend, Lazarus, who was deathly ill. Yet, he waited two more days! That seems so strange.

Waiting is part and parcel of being human. Faith is trusting that our waiting is not futile. God never forgets about us. That sometimes takes great faith. Think in the scripture of some of the people that Jesus healed. There was the woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years. I am certain she must have prayed for God's help, but it took twelve years. Then there is the man who we heard of last week who is an adult and had been born blind. How many years did he have to endure his infirmity, yet now God gave him sight? There was the woman who was stooped over for 18 years that Jesus cured on a Sabbath. How about the lepers? They were as good as dead. They couldn't associate with others. They had to stay outside of town and ring a bell telling everyone they were unclean. Sometimes those who were said to have leprosy could have had eczema and not leprosy. That didn't matter. They were now deemed unclean. They could have been living like that for years before Jesus came into their life. All of these people had to wait on God for healing.

You and I have had to wait on God too. Sometimes it is waiting for something good to happen. We wait to hear about a job we interviewed for or for a college application acceptance. Sometimes it's waiting for news that may be bad from a doctor that said further tests had to be done because something showed up. But most of the time we simply have to wait for understanding and peace. When something bad occurs it isn't immediately apparent how it fits into life. When our dreams or ideals change we wonder if God is really present.

Jesus made Martha and Mary wait two days. He did so only to prove that he was truly the source of resurrection. For when someone died in the time of Jesus, without monitoring devices they thought the spirit hovered around the body up to three days. After that they were certainly dead. If Jesus had come and Lazarus had only been dead two days they might have said that Jesus didn't really raise him from the dead, but simply gave him a miraculous healing. That would still be pretty fantastic, but he knew that the people would soon face an even greater challenge. Could they accept the one they loved and trusted as Messiah and teacher be crucified on a cross? Could they trust that Jesus would be raised up? Martha and Mary got a glimpse of resurrection in their brother. Yet, they too would be challenged to believe. Martha had begun to trust in the power of God even when it wasn't apparent. That would be tested further in the death of Jesus. In our lives we often discover that the waiting is necessary. It is necessary to put things in proper perspective. When someone dies it takes time to grieve. When we lose a job it takes time to figure out what to do next. When we ask God for help, God responds but often not in the timeframe that we would like. Many times when time has passed we realize why that is necessary. But at the time it sure seems lonely and frustrating.

Today we are asked to have the same faith of Martha. Do you believe even when you can't see? Do you believe even when it looks as bleak as a tomb with a stone laid across it? Do you believe like the prophet Ezekiel that God could turn dry bones into a living being or raise the dead from their graves? Whatever seems too hard to imagine we are asked to believe and trust. Next week we will be challenged even further to trust and believe in a God who is willing to die for us. Pray for trust and faith that God can do great things even when it isn't apparent.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45

April 6, 2014

靈 修 生 活

隨 聖 神 切 望，導 入 生 命 與 平 安

陳 日 君 樞 機 主 教

聖洗的恩寵如水如光滋養我們的心靈；其實我們的心靈已因罪惡而喪亡，所以聖洗使我們復生，給我們新生命。這個主日的主題就是「復生」。

今天第一篇讀經由卅七章十二節開始；其實前幾節頗值得我們重溫。吾主對平原上許多乾枯的骨頭說：「乾枯的骨頭，聽上主的話吧！」吾主上主對這些骨頭這樣說：「看……我要給你們放上筋，加上肉，包上皮，把氣息注入你們內，你們就復活了」。接著那些復活了枯骨都站了起來，且成為一支極龐大的軍隊。那是多麼雄壯的景象。不過事實上這「復生」的神視，只為形容以民的復興。福音所敘述的倒是真正的「復生」。

耶穌和門徒們正前往耶路撒冷去。心情是沉重的，門徒們提醒耶穌猶太人正企圖殺害祂；既然耶穌固執要去，多默說：「我們也去，同祂一起去死吧」。死亡的陰影籠罩著這膽怯的一群，耶穌的好朋友拉匝祿死了，耶穌自己也將會被人謀害，門徒們的命運也不會比師傅好。

面對死亡人是多麼無奈。當然，冷靜想一下，一切生物有生有滅；死亡該是一件正常的事。但我們的心，還是不能把死亡看成正常，天主自己把永生的期望放在我們心裡。耶穌不是也說過：「我來是為叫他們獲得生命，且獲得更豐富的生命」(若十 10) 嗎？那末怎麼祂傳道的結局竟是死亡呢？

籍著死亡而戰勝死亡前，耶穌行了一個奇跡，為幫助宗徒們明白那即將發生的、更奇妙的事跡。

生命死亡正在決鬥。耶穌控制局面，祂知道拉匝祿重病並不心急，並沒醫好他，卻讓他死去，為能顯示祂對生命的大權。祂不怕拉匝祿的復生使祂的敵人更決心要除掉祂。

若望的描寫常強調信仰的旅程。瑪爾大相信末日的復活，瑪利亞相信耶穌本可醫好她哥哥；耶穌帶她們了解，祂就是復活、生命，祂把死了四天的拉匝祿從墳墓中叫了出來。

耶穌是真天主，祂控制生命與死亡，祂也是真人，祂在朋友的死亡前觸景生情。若望刻意把當時的情景描寫成耶穌死後的情景一樣；瑪利亞的眼淚、墳墓和蓋住它的大石、纏住手腳的布條、蒙著面的汗巾……。拉匝祿的、耶穌的，都是真正的死亡，接著是真正的復生。

現代人對死亡的現象非常好奇，不少大學甚至有「死亡學」科目。他們肯定會問：為什麼福音的作者沒有訪問拉匝祿，叫他講講死後復生前後的處境和復生後的感受等。對這些若望沒有興趣，其實他這裡描寫的只是一個徵兆，不是奧跡本身。拉匝祿要向我們介紹的，卻是在基督身上即將開始的、人類真正的、決定性的復活----復生而永不再死。

籍著祂的死亡，耶穌為我們爭取了永生。聖洗聖事是永生的開始。固然我們還要經過死亡而復活，但新生命已開始；先是在信德中、苦路上，最後是面對面享見天主容貌而得圓滿的福樂。

聖保祿在第二讀經所描寫的，就是還在苦路上的情景----肉性和聖神的鬥爭。隨從肉性就是不服從天主的法律，自以為爭取自己的自由和幸福，其實「隨從肉性切望，導入至死」，外表看來瀟灑自在，事實上卻是行屍走肉。隨從聖神切望，才導入生命與平安。

摘自「公教報」