

God of Mercy and Redemption

The first reading from Ezekiel tells us about God's promise to the people of Israel that he will even raise them up from death. Israel was a geopolitical strategic place as the crossroads of powerful empires. When empires rise and fall, the people of Israel suffered collateral damage. As a nation, it was not powerful enough to resist mighty empires' military excursions. Yet, God kept his promise, sending them hope and redemption through his prophets. Ezekiel's message must have come at the lowest morale of the people, to the point of giving up and lifelessness. The Lord said, "I will put my spirit in you that you may live." This verse is similar to the creation story that God breathed his spirit into the person he made out of clay (dirt). In this scenario, it is the grave where we turn into ashes. He tells us about the continued and continuous creating act of God. God's creative act of redemption is always available to us.

The Gospel reading is also about resurrection, however, unlike the symbolism in prophecy of Ezekiel, a real miracle of resurrection takes place. The brother of Martha and Mary, Lazarus, also friend of Jesus, is raised from the dead after four days laying in the tomb. Jesus weeps at the death of his friend. The Gospel of John tells us, "He became perturbed and deeply troubled." A sign of God's mercy and compassion towards us when we are away from him and deprived of his grace because of our free will. St. Augustine wrote, "God created you without your permission, but he cannot save you without your cooperation." Our cooperation does not mean pure human effort, it has to be imbued with faith and humility. Martha and Mary confess that Jesus is the Christ and believed he is the source of life and resurrection. As we get closer to the end of the Lenten Season, are we ready to embrace the Pascal Mystery, Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus?

In the second reading, St. Paul reminds us that real death is the absence of God from us, when we live according to the flesh. When our lifestyle is modeled after other mortals, we are not living according to the spirit; therefore, we need to evaluate our life and return to God, asking for his mercy and redemption. St. Paul writes, "But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness." The mercy of God is always available to take us back to him and create us anew. The Psalmist sums it up for us saying, "For the Lord is kindness and with him is plenteous redemption." Are we ready to be counted among those worthy of his redemption?

by Fessahaye Mebrahtu