

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #34

READING I Ezekiel 37:12-14

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

Thus says the LORD GOD:

O my people, I will open your **graves**
and have you rise from them,
and **bring you back** to the land of **Israel**.

Then you shall know that I **am** the **Lord**,
when I open your graves and have you **rise** from them,
O my people!

I will put my spirit **in you** that you may live,
and I will **settle** you upon your **land**;

thus you shall know that I **am** the **LORD**.

I have promised, and I will do it, says the **LORD**.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 (7)

R. With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
LORD, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to my voice in supplication.

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,
LORD, who can stand?
But with you is forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

I trust in the LORD;
my soul trusts in his word.
More than sentinels wait for the dawn,
let Israel wait for the LORD.

For with the LORD is kindness
and with him is plenteous redemption;
and he will redeem Israel
from all their iniquities.

Ezekiel = ee-ZEE-kee-uhl

Such good news! Pause before you begin to proclaim. Make your voice strong and take your time. Use good eye contact. Stress the words in bold.

Say this line and the next slowly and with a smile.

For meditation and context:

READING I Ezekiel was a prophet during the exile in Babylon; he was one of the exiled Jerusalemites. As both prophet and priest, his tasks ranged from chastising and correcting to comforting and offering hope. He fills his prophecies with striking imagery and dramatic visions that open up new ways of pondering on the great mysteries of God, life, and the future. His poetic language raises questions about the meaning of his imagery, eliciting a variety of interpretations that often go beyond Ezekiel's intent.

Ezekiel's prophecies begin with divine judgment and end with consolation. In today's reading, God speaks to the humiliated, mournful exiles. The broad valley that Ezekiel sees in his vision is filled with bones, symbolic of the exiles themselves, dried up and without hope. Torn away from their land that was long ago promised to them by God, they seem to be living in the burial ground of Babylon. In the midst of this horrid valley of death, God promises to open up their grave of exile and bring them back to their own land. God promises that they will *rise* from their graves. The same

verb is used to describe the people going up to Jerusalem, the mountain of the Lord (e.g., Psalm 24:3). When the people rise, they will again be able to worship the Lord in the holy city.

God tells the people that when they have been brought back to their land they will "know that I am the Lord." For the people to know the Lord is the reason God is freeing them from their entombment in exile. To know the Lord is to be in a right covenant relationship with God, manifest by attentiveness, obedience, and worship. The opposite of knowing is widespread

READING II Romans 8:8–11

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

Those who are **in the flesh** cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh;

on the **contrary**, you **are** in the spirit,
if **only** the **Spirit of God** dwells in you.

Whoever does **not** have the **Spirit of Christ** does **not belong**
to him.

But if **Christ** is in you,

although the body is dead because of sin,
the **spirit** is alive because of righteousness.

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.

Pause for emphasis before you say this line.
Proclaim with a strong voice. Use good
eye contact.

Build with intensity until the end of the
reading. Always remember to articulate
your words.

TO KEEP IN MIND

Be careful not to swallow words by
mumbling. Articulate carefully,
especially at the end of lines.

rebellious refusal to listen and obey. Their lack of knowing was the reason God sent them into exile in the first place. Yet, they remain God's people. God will create them anew by sending the spirit (*ruah*), imparting to them the Lord's own life-giving breath.

Ezekiel's poetic imagery in this oracle has significance beyond its original meaning. Christians have long seen the promise of rising from the grave as fulfilled in Jesus' Resurrection and assurance of the future resurrection of the dead. The final verse in today's reading that first offered assurance to the exiles in Babylon continues to offer

hope-filled assurance today: what God has promised will be fulfilled!

READING II In the first verse of the reading from Romans, Paul contrasts living in the flesh with living in the spirit. As he juxtaposes flesh (*sarx*) and spirit (*pneuma*), Paul uses terms that have more than one meaning. From one perspective, Jesus is described as being "in the flesh," (Hebrews 5:7), and similarly in John's Gospel, Jesus is the Word who "became flesh" (1:14). In both passages being in the flesh simply means being fully human, one

who shares in the human condition. At other times, flesh has a negative connotation, indicative of a person's orientation toward sin. Sins of the flesh, though sometimes misinterpreted to refer only to sins of a physical or sexual nature, are actually much broader. As described by Paul, they include rivalry and jealousy and other selfish actions and attitudes (Galatians 5:19–21). Here in Romans, Paul is using this second meaning of flesh, having already given a brief summary in the verse preceding it, "the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God,