

## Reflection on the Scripture Readings

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – March 29, 2020

A story of faith and trust that I read years ago is very relevant to the times we are living these days, as we daily tackle the challenges posed by the covid-19 virus.

Somewhere in the Middle East, an earthquake caused a school building to collapse while the children were in their classrooms. The parents and town's volunteers worked from morning till night through the rubbles, without taking any rest, trying to rescue as many children as they could.

After a couple of days the volunteers, tired, stressed out and hungry, stopped digging and decided to go home, in order to resume the search the following day. But one man would not stop searching, and moving frantically bricks and rocks with his bare hands, tears in his eyes, he screamed: "My little boy is in there, and I promised him that no matter what happens, I would always be there to pick him up from school. I cannot stop until I find him!"

The man continued his search with the help of a few volunteers, as, from time to time, he would call his son's name. Suddenly the father heard his son's voice responding: "abba', abba', we are here..." And as the father and son embraced, the little boy screamed with excitement to his classmates who were crying and scared: "See, I told you my father would find us, because he had promised me he would come for me no matter what!"

These days, we too may feel that the world has collapsed on top of us, as those things we thought made us feel secure and comfortable, suddenly were removed, leaving us vulnerable, feeling defenseless.

We may ask ourselves: "What is going on? Where are we heading? When will it be over?"

This unexpected global crisis can perhaps help us understand what the ancient Israel must have felt during their troublesome history, as recounted in the Old Testament.

God's promises delivered to Israel through the prophet Ezekiel, as we read this 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, are also delivered to us today, as we live this difficult virus situation.

God is reminding us: "You are not alone, I am with you." – ***"I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves (where you are in isolation, quarantined...) ...And you shall know that I am the Lord..."*** (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

God will change this tragic situation to our benefit, so that we may learn that the material comforts of this world have a short duration, and therefore can never guarantee the happiness and peace that the human heart desires.

God, our Creator, who can draw good out of evil, is giving us an opportunity to learn to appreciate the many blessings we tend to take for granted, to realize that we cannot rely solely on our own human power for our essential needs, but that we need to change our life around and return to God, and live only for Him.

After this killing virus is defeated, and it will be, and things return to normal, let us remember that our merciful Father-God never gave up *“digging”* in our hearts, in search for a vital sign, for a humble little prayer calling out... *“abba’, daddy help me...”* and that He dug us out of our crumbled world, as He inspired the health providers and civil authorities to do the right thing!

When everything seems to be hopeless, when we see death and darkness around us, we need to turn to Jesus who says in this Sunday’s Gospel: ***“I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”*** (John 11:25-26).

As Catholics who are so blessed to have the REAL PRESENCE of the Son of God among us in His Flesh and Blood, Soul and Divinity, we must believe in his promises and repeat with the apostle Peter: *“Lord, to whom can we go? You have the WORDS of eternal life”* (John 6:68).

This virus, for us Christians, has given a name to the cross we are being asked to carry during LENT. If we carry it behind Jesus as he climbs the Calvary, we will also experience with Him the Resurrection and the New Life.

Let us treasure this experience and ponder it in our hearts for future reference.

Like the little boy in the story, we too can reassure others: *“See... I told you our FATHER GOD would never abandon us... He promised to rescue us and He does!”*

A **new springtime** for the Church and the world is on the horizon.

Let us pray as one family: *“OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN....”*

*Deacon Diego*