

5th Sunday of Lent



*Yesterday is but a dream.
Tomorrow is only a vision.
But today well lived makes every
yesterday a dream of happiness,
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day.*

This Sanskrit proverb provides a practical attitude for living one day at a time, and can provide a refocus on serenity in the midst of uncertainty. As we continue to adapt to changes brought on by the global threat of a virus, it is valuable to assess the expectations we hold toward God, where we align our hope, and the spiritual hunger that remains. This week's Sunday Mass Readings challenge us to consider elements of life, death, faith, and attachment.

Saint Paul references a contrast between *flesh* and *spirit* in this week's Second Reading. We commonly associate the word *flesh* with our bodies and *spirit* with our soul—as if the spirit is pure and the flesh is corrupt. Consistent with Jewish thought, Saint Paul does not portray humans as having two separable parts, but understands that *all* of a person acts spiritually or of the flesh on a given occasion.

How is behavior of the flesh different than that of the spirit? Put simply, it is behavior that is "attached" or "addicted." We act of the flesh when we put a thing or a person in God's place. For our loved ones, this resembled placing the pursuit of a substance (such as alcohol, drugs, or food) above all else. Things are treated like they're people and people like they're things. We've been hurt, and it's valuable to acknowledge that. We need to ensure that we are not placing the pursuit of other peoples' happiness or expected behavior above our pursuit of God.

Over time, this process leaves us feeling dead inside. Our emotions dry up, and all that is left is the zombie-like desire for the things that don't really fill us. We can fall into this pattern when we put our hope in the human powers of this world to save us. In our loneliness, we might even ask why we've been abandoned by God.

The story of Lazarus in this week's Gospel Reading shines a light on this shared experience. Some people who saw Jesus mourn for Lazarus asked, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" Perhaps we've had these doubts about God's ability to help our loved ones. Are we wondering the same thing in light of recent global events?

Despite our short-term vision and tendency to rely on our limited human strength, God cares. Like Lazarus, we were tied up and bounded by the presence of addiction and unhealthy attachment. Our current cycle of insanity began as a way to cope with the world around us and could potentially lead us to spiritual death. Our only hope is a spiritual awakening, promised by the 12 steps of recovery and the sacramental life of the Church. Our solution is characterized by a total dependence on God.

The freedom we find in Jesus is lasting and compels us to share the same with others. We must remain honest, open, and willing if we are to find relief from our own expectations of what the world should look like. Failure to do so will leave us resentful, afraid, and stuck in our own anxiety. Over time, our self-reliance will lead us back to the fatal cycle of control, fear, and shame.

We cannot change yesterday and tomorrow is not promised. All things, including our faith, recovery, and the health of our family are a gift from God. Like Lazarus, Jesus cares enough to breathe new life into us so that we may properly order our lives and share the good news with others.

Reflection Questions

- How has your recovery been impacted by changes in the world around us?
 - What new personal challenges exist today that were not present a month ago?
- Have you ever thought that God could save your addicted family member but chooses not to?
 - What helps relieve these ideas?
- What spiritual tools and practices help relieve you of expectations put on God and other people?

Virtual Meetings Now Available

General Recovery Meetings

- Tuesdays & Thursdays: 8:00 PM ET/5:00 PM PT
- Wednesdays & Saturdays: 12:00 PM ET/9:00 AM PT

Family & Friends Recovery Meetings

- Wednesdays: 7:00 PM ET/4:00 PM PT
- Fridays: 3:00 PM ET/12:00 PM PT

Men's Lust Addiction Recovery Meetings

- Mondays: 10:00 PM ET/7:00 PM PT
- Wednesdays: 3:00 PM ET/12:00 PM PT

Sunday Mass Readings This Week

1st Reading: Ezekiel 37:12-14

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

2nd Reading: Romans 8:8-11

Gospel: John 11:1-45