

Chaplain's Bulletin March 26, 2023



Dear Folks,

In the Gospel of John, we see Jesus perform seven miracles, “signs” that “revealed His glory (see John 2:11).” There is changing water into wine (John 2:1-10), healing the royal official’s son (Jn 4:46-54), healing the paralytic in the pool at Bethesda (Jn 5:1-9), multiplication of loaves and fishes (Jn 6:1-14), walking on water (Jn 6:16-21), healing the man born blind (Jn 9:1-7), and finally the raising of Lazarus. Seven in the number for a divinely perfect act, and Jesus has demonstrated what He intended to demonstrate, climaxing on the raising of Lazarus. After this we start homing in on Jesus’ passion.

What does Jesus point to with the raising of Lazarus? Jesus’ conversation with Martha suggests that the resurrection and new life is not just at the last day but is present now (Jn 11:23-26). How do we understand that?

In our second reading, we see St. Paul say, “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 (Romans 8:8-9).” How do we understand not being in the flesh? We start by backing up to verse 5: “For those who live according to the flesh are concerned with the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the spirit with the things of the spirit. The concern of the flesh is death, but the concern of the spirit is life and peace. For the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it (Romans 8:5-7).” See also Galatians 5: 16-26, especially “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit (Gal 5:24-25).”

To live according to the flesh is to be living for power, pleasure, wealth, and honor, the things that pass away. If we live for those things, they rule us and enslave us, and when they are gone we are lost. If we live for eternal things, then the things of the earth can be enjoyed in their proper place, but they do not rule over us.

We see St. Paul also say, “For the love of Christ impels us, once we have come to the conviction that one died for all; therefore, all have died. He indeed died for all, so that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh, even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer. So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come (2 Corinthians 5:14-17).” See also Colossians 3:1-10.

Jesus also said, “Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Mat 16:15, see Luke 17:33).” As the Second Vatican Council taught, “man can fully discover his true self only in a sincere gift of himself (Gaudium et Spes, n. 24).”

By Jesus’ great and perfect gift of Self, climaxing at the cross, He enables us to receive Him and give ourselves

as gift to Him, and in so doing we are freed from slavery to the flesh. We are not our own, but “have been purchased at a price (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).”

Do we consider ourselves not our own, but belonging to Jesus? How does that look like in practice? This is what it is to participate now in eternal life. I suggest that reflecting on these Scriptures along with this Sunday’s readings will give us much material for the rest of Lent.

Blessings,

Fr Jim