

FROM THE DESK OF **Fr. Julius**



Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Grace and peace!

Last Sunday, we were fortunate to welcome His Excellency, Bishop Stika who concurrently shared the 14th Anniversary of his Episcopal Ordination with St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Feast with us! Your lively reception was well acknowledged by our Bishop who appreciated the holy hospitality. Looking ahead to our following week's liturgy, we find ourselves transitioning into Palm Sunday! Still today, with the raising of Lazarus back to life, the liturgy directs us to God's final triumph over death. But, before that new life can be born and bear fruit, the old life, like the grain of wheat, has to die. Therefore, man needs not cling to his old ways, afraid of what might happen if we say yes to God's invitation to new life.

In our First Reading, Ezekiel bears witness to an unprecedented miracle the Lord is about to do: restore life to the deceased Israelites, opening the graves in which they were placed, in preparation for their return to the Promised Land. He assures his people that nothing – not even death – will stop God from carrying out His promise! St. Paul, in the Second Reading, affirms to those early Roman Christians facing death by persecution, as well as our 'culture of death', that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and Who dwells within us, gives life to our mortal bodies.

Our Gospel this weekend is the compelling account of Jesus' raising of his late friend Lazarus after four days in the grave. Recorded by St. John the Evangelist as the final and greatest sign of our Deliverer, this is representative of our Lord's complete dominion over physical death. Describing this great miracle, the Church assures us that how faithfully you and I live in Christ now will continue after our death.

"Roll away the stone, unbind him and let him go" were the sweetly consoling words from Our Lord. His purpose was to manifest His Divinity to all His followers, allowing them to be witnesses to the unimaginable! Mercifully, Jesus comes to us in the Sacraments, as we pray and as we read Sacred Scripture, giving us knowledge and hope in our own bodily death. Let us ask Jesus during these last somber weeks to bring the light and the power of the Holy Spirit into our private lives and liberate us from our personal tombs, allowing for a deeper embrace of our own deaths.

St. Therese of Lisieux found herself flooded with joy when she learned in 1897 that she had tuberculosis, an illness then considered incurable. She welcomed the blood she was coughing up as a harbinger of Jesus' embrace, and she died within a few months of this. "Yes, I'm like a tired and harassed traveler, who reaches the end of her journey and falls over. Yes, but I'll be falling into God's arms!" She reminds us that the true purpose of our life is to be united with God in heaven.

Happy Sunday!