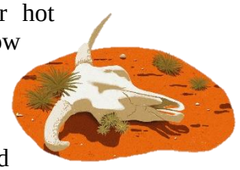
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time — February 5, 2023

From the Desk of Fr. Leo

Imagine yourself alone in death valley. It is summer. The sun keeps pressing its heat relentlessly through your skin to the muscles, organs, and bones of your body; and the dry winds keep taking your breath away. All about you, you notice bones, bones parched by the sun and wind, the bones of those who have succumbed to the dryness and death of the desert. You are bewildered, almost delirious, as you grow faint. You are alone, weary and hot, hungry and thirsty. Finally exhausted, you begin to dream of restful shade and cool breezes across your hot forehead. And you know, know surely, that your very life depends upon the soft winds of companionship and the cool refreshment of food and drink. You know that you need help.



The prophet Ezekiel knew it, knew it long before the coming of Jesus. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E., he imagined Israel in its captivity and exile as dry bones strewn in a desert. And he dreamt of a time when a cool breeze, the refreshing breath of God, the Spirit of God, would breathe life into the bones. Even graves would be opened, and the people would be restored. Israel would live again, at peace, in their own land. After all, God had promised help, and God's promises are sure.

The apostle St. Paul knew that we needed help. He knew it because of Israel. And he knew it because of Jesus. For St. Paul, the choice is between the dry desert of the flesh and the refreshing oasis of the Spirit. Life in the Spirit is life with others, life where we are helped, life where we gladly share food and drink. The ultimate choice, the choice between life and death, is the choice between the death of separation and and abandonment and the life of fellowship.

And Lazarus knew it. The story of Lazarus, as the gospel of St. John tells it, is detailed and vivid. It is a story of illness and death, of burial and resurrection. Told as a sign of Jesus' power, it includes the shortest verse in the Bible, "Jesus wept." And in it we know the compassion of Jesus. Yet at its heart is the message that Jesus, like Moses is engaged in God's work of helping. And the goal, if you move on to the rest of the story, is the meal which Jesus shares with Mary and Martha and Lazarus. For Jesus, as for Moses, life finds its possibility and its meaning in a feast. We are helped by, and towards a table.

God helps, yes. And we help too! Our efforts are a part of God's plan. They always are. Mercifully, history is filled with the stories of those whose efforts have helped. Moses, Ezekiel, Jesus, Mary, Martha, and countless generations of the faithful, both men and women. And now, God wants our help.

Now, especially, just now, as we near this season of Lent, when many, old and young are coming from death of the desert to the new life in Christ, God welcomes our help. For many whose lives we may touch, what we do may be a matter of life and death, death and life. Life together in Christ.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**January 31**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Wed.	**February 1**	**11:00AM**
Special Intentions		
Thur.	**February 2**	**11:00AM**
Jessica Ouk		Ma & Pa
Fri.	**February 3**	**11:00AM**
Thomas Wolthuis †		Roxene
Sat.	**February 4**	**4:30PM**
Bill Valli †		Bruce & Gina
Sun.	**February 5**	**9:00AM**
Matt Airoldi †		Bill & Diane
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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