

Father O'Connor's Homily for 22 March 2026
Fifth Sunday of Lent – A

Ezekiel 37: 12-14

Romans 8: 8-11

John 11: 1-45

The prophet Ezekiel, in the first reading today, takes us to a cemetery. What a cheerful thought, right? Until we listen to what God says through Ezekiel: “O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them.... I will put my spirit in you that you may live.”

We see that prophecy being fulfilled in today's Gospel with the raising of Lazarus. Mary, Martha and Lazarus – two sisters and their brother – had a home that Jesus loved to visit. It was a place for Him to get away from the crowd, be with close friends, have a good meal and conversation, and then be ready to get back to His public life again.

Jesus had been told that Lazarus was ill. By the time Jesus got there Lazarus was already in the tomb for four days. The Gospel says that Jesus wept. He cried, and people noticed and said, “See how He loved him.” Any of you who right now are mourning the loss of someone you love know how Jesus felt.

And then Jesus, showing that He was the Lord of Life, commands that the stone be moved away from the tomb. And He says, “Lazarus, come out!” Lazarus got up and walked out of that tomb. He was still dressed in his burial wrappings. He must have looked like a mummy. But Lazarus was now truly alive. Then Jesus says to the people, “Untie him and let him go.”

“O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them.... I will put my spirit in you that you may live.”

Anna Quinlan writes about being on the boardwalk one summer day at Coney Island Amusement Park in New York. As she sat there watching the water, a man sat down nearby. She soon realized that he was homeless.

He began talking with her and described his schedule. How at night, when the park would shut down, he would climb into a car on the Tilt-a-Whirl or he would go underneath the Cyclone roller-coaster to sleep. Then at daybreak he would take his collection of newspapers that people had left behind and he would go to the boardwalk and spend the day reading them and watching the water.

Anna said to him, “Why don’t you just go to a shelter?” He gave her a puzzled look and, pointing to the water, said, “Lady, look at the view. Look at the view!”

She goes on to write that this experience gave her a fresh idea. Here was a man who didn’t have a dime in his pocket, who had no home to call his own, but who still loved life. As she thought about this, she realized that with God’s grace, even when life is tough, we can still find joy. In spite of troubled relationships, or rejection at school, or employment worries, or mourning the loss of someone we love dearly, with God’s grace we can get through it and even find joy in our living. “Look at the view. Look at the view!”

A man was writing about his childhood. They had a dog named “Waddles.” He doesn’t say why the dog’s name was Waddles, but I suspect that it was because it did! He came home from school one day, and his dad explained that dear Waddles had waddled into the street and got hit by a car. He and his father cried together. Then they had a family funeral for Waddles in the back yard, and they buried him underneath the apple tree.

The man said there were a couple of lines that his dad used when he preached the homily for Waddles. One of them was: “Son, remember that everyone we have in life, everything we have in life, is on loan to us from God.” That’s a powerful insight. “Everyone, everything we have in life is on loan to us from God.”

His dad’s second point was: “Don’t bury yourself in the grave of the one that you love. Go on living. Live!” Another powerful insight.

In spite of everything that’s tough, with God’s grace we can make it through – and live!

The Lord says through Ezekiel, “O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them.... I will put my spirit in you that you may live.” Even now, even before we die, Jesus Christ is the Lord of our life, and He enables us to live fully in Him through the life of grace.

Next weekend is Palm Sunday, Passion Sunday, and we begin Holy Week. Holy Week will take us to Holy Thursday night when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and led to suffer and die for us on Good Friday. Jesus was not looking forward to His death. He had prayed in the Garden, “Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me. Yet not my will but yours be done” [Luke 22: 42].

Jesus went to Calvary to die for us, but Calvary was not the last word. Easter Sunday is, when Jesus rose from the dead so that we could live with

Him forever in heaven. And He had then – and still has today – every single one of us in mind.

“O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them... I will put my spirit in you that you may live.”

“Lazarus, come out.... Untie him and let him go.”

“Everyone, everything we have in life is on loan to us from God.”

“Don’t bury yourself in the grave of the one that you love. Go on living. Live!”

With God’s grace, give yourself another chance. Give God another chance. “Look at the view. Look at the view – and live!”