

20. May 2024

God raises the dead

Ez 37:1-14

Reading for the Monday after Pentecost

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me round among them; and behold, there were very many upon the valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest." Again he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And as I looked, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great host.

Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it, says the Lord."

This passage from Ezekiel, which refers primarily to the people of Israel, can also be applied - metaphorically, but very aptly - to the "spiritual resurrection" that the Holy Spirit works in a person. In this way we can remain in the atmosphere of the Solemnity of Pentecost.

Without the presence of the Holy Spirit, a person's bones are dry and scattered, because he lacks the principle that orders his life and establishes in it the correct hierarchy of values.

In this reading we see that God speaks through the prophet and raises to life what was dead. This happens through the Holy Spirit. He infuses us with the life of God, as we sing in the Pentecost sequence: "If thou take thy grace away, nothing pure in man will stay; all his good is turned to ill".

The life of sin, which is a dense darkness, ends with the person, because his true self withers and is as dead. Only when the Spirit touches him does he awaken. Let us recall the story of creation when God breathed life into man: "*Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being*" (Gen 2:7).

Just as here God breathes the breath of life, so the Spirit infuses supernatural life. After His resurrection, Jesus breathed on His disciples and said to them: "*Receive the Holy Spirit*" (Jn 20:22).

What if we applied this passage from the prophet Ezekiel to all humanity? What would it be like if the Holy Spirit awakened all humanity to life? How much hope would arise as people encountered the living God! How they would come out of their graves and return to their fatherland, their home, and live in the close presence of God in time and eternity!

Surely, God wants this to happen, and indeed, He continually offers us this "resurrection of the dead" through His Holy Spirit! Why else would the Lord have sent His Holy Spirit, why would Jesus willingly give His life as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, why would God have such infinite patience with us? Perhaps it is difficult for us to believe that this "return to life" for mankind can still come, because we see so much unbelief and the current is moving in the opposite direction.

But God's patience is greater than our lack of faith, and He "pursues" man to the hour of his death in order to conquer him... If only once he calls on God from his heart as his "Father", he will not be condemned; if only once he cries out to God sincerely and

seeks Him with his will, even if his heart is cold and his feelings seem indifferent, he will not be ignored.

God wants to raise the dead! In addition to giving us natural life, God also wants to give us supernatural life. He offers salvation to all people! Those who have already received the grace of knowing God have the mission to do everything in their power so that other people may also experience something of God's love. This is the greatest work of love and mercy!