

Fourth Sunday of Lent (John 3, 14-21)

In the First Reading (2 Chronicles 36, 14-16; 19-23) the Jews had just experienced destruction, death, and deportation. However, just when it seemed as if it were all over for them, God inspired King Cyrus of Persia not only to release them from exile, but also to help them rebuild their Temple.

God often sends people to help us through a crisis: parents, children, and relatives; a true friend who come through when no one will; sometimes it is the very person we never expect who bails us out. Regardless of who it is that God sends to help us in times of trouble, there is one person He always sends to be at our side- His own Son Jesus Christ.

In today's Gospel we read, "*God so loved the world that He sent His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him may not die but have eternal life.*" The primary meaning is about life after death. When we die, it will not be the end of our life but only a time for change into new kind of life- eternal life as opposed to temporal life, immortality as opposed to mortality. Many people think that the story of human life is "Birth, Life, and Death." But for us Christians, the story of human life is "Birth, Death, and Resurrection." Death is not the last chapter of our human story. There is another chapter to come- Resurrection and a life that has no end!

There is also a secondary meaning to the passage. We have eternal life even now. In a sense, we already share in the life to come. It has already begun for us. We only wait for its full development and completion.

In other words, God is sending His Son to be with us every moment of our lives and if we really believe in Him we will not die but live, we will not give up in times of crisis but find a new way to survive, we will not be defeated by difficulties, but devise ways to overcome them.

What a source of strength to know that if we believe in Jesus, we will not die but live. Even though death may separate us from someone dear to us, the Lord will be with us in our loneliness and raise up new relationships to support us. Even though a tragedy like a fire or a flood may devastate our home, the Lord will be with us to rebuild what we have lost. Even though a mistake may destroy some of our precious dreams, the Lord will be with us and inspires us to start all over again.

Like the Jews in the exile, we endure small deaths in many ways. Nonetheless, we can find new life because of our faith in the Lord Jesus. So long as we believe in Jesus Christ we don't have to die by giving up but can continue to live meaningfully by going on!

Amen.