

Breathe with the Spirit Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, August 19, 2016

7:30 PM **Ez 37:1-14;** Mt 22:34-40 (St. John Eudes, priest) (Healing Mass)

(When we let God become the focus of our lives and when we start to understand that we belong to God, then we start to change. This change is invigorating and joyful and life-giving and healing.)

Tonight we have an example of how the word of prophecy is fulfilled. Ezekiel saw bones rising up from the graves and being knit together, but there was something missing. They had sinews, that means muscle, they had flesh. They had bones, but they didn't have spirit. God's people are meant to have God's Spirit. All living things have some spirit. All living things breathe or they wouldn't be living. But **we are meant to live with the Spirit of God and we are not really and truly alive until we breathe with the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit.** That's what the prophecy is about.

Now at the time of Jesus—of course **Jesus is the Word of God incarnate** and obviously he breathes with the Holy Spirit. **His mission is to bring the Holy Spirit into the lives of everyone.** And here he has just silenced the Sadducees. Well, who are they? Do you know who the Sadducees were? **The Sadducees were a group within Judaism that put all of their value on the Temple.** They were Temple priesthood people. For them what mattered was the Temple and what went on in the Temple.

Of course Jesus had terrible problems with the Temple, as you know. He drove away all the animals; this because **what God really wants is our hearts and our minds and our wills offered to him in sacrifice, not animals.** Now this tradition was around for thousands of years and it's okay as long as you understand it as symbolic of yourself, but that was lost in translation. Pretty soon people thought that God really wanted all those animals, even though the prophets said, no, that's what they thought. **So now he has silenced the Sadducees.**

So now the Pharisees gather together and one of them, a scholar of the Law—because the **Pharisees were a party not focused on the Temple, but focused on Torah.** Torah is the instruction of God, originally the Decalogue. You know that as the ten commands, but it didn't stop there. If you read the first five books of the Old Testament, you will see the Torah kept expanding: the Book of Leviticus, the Book of Numbers, even Exodus, and then it's all recapitulated in Deuteronomy—**lots of laws.** And it didn't stop there. Under the influence of the rabbis everything kept being reinterpreted and there is more and more and more and more rules, with the idea that God is pleased with rules. The Sadducees said God is pleased with sacrifices, animals. **The Pharisees said God is pleased when you follow rules.** Well, rules are good, but that's not how we attain holiness. We won't get into details; just in general, it's not with rules.

So Jesus says, okay **what commandment is the greatest?** I'll tell you. It's "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart." That's not really a rule; that's a principle of life. And this quotation is really from Deuteronomy chapter 6, but it reflects very much the first commandment in Exodus as well. "I am the Lord thy God. You will have no strange gods before me." But we love the Lord, our God, with all our soul and our mind and all our heart. That's the idea. But then he adds, "The second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Now both these are in the Old Testament. There is nothing new here. **What's new is the two come**

together and this is what's new: The whole law and the prophets depend on these two."

Now if you believe that, that belief might put the rabbinate out of business in a sense because they were all about what are the rules. Well, now there are only two. Can't you all remember those? Okay, can't you understand that **this is a revolutionary idea**? And that's what Jesus is saying.

Now the interesting thing is that when we love God with our whole heart, mind, and soul, we are not exhausted. You might logically think, if you love God for your whole heart, your whole mind, your whole soul, then you will have nothing left. No, that's wrong because **God is infinite love and so when we love God with all we are and all we have we are expanded**; we become part of something that is infinite; **we are attached to and become participants in an infinite loving Being, and our energy is increased** and we have all this extra energy to do what with? **To love our neighbor as ourselves**—to love our neighbor as ourselves. And we have all this energy because love is infinite. And when we love God with all of our being, our being increases and expands to infinity; we become part of infinity, although that may not sound logical. **We become part of something so much greater than ourselves**; love envelopes us and this is our vocation as believers. And how does this happen? **Through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

This is the Spirit Ezekiel was talking about, the breath. And we do breathe with that breath. We have to understand who we are according to the word of God. We all grow up. We all have families. There is good and bad in everything. But we will never know who we are if the only information we get is from our own human experience, our limited human experience of talking to people and trying things for ourselves because we are not created for ourselves. We are created for God. And **when we let God become the focus of our lives and when we start to understand that we belong to God and that's who we are created to be, then we start to change. And this change is invigorating and joyful and life-giving and healing.** And even if there are aspects of our lives that resist healing, even if there are chronic complaints and disorders, we experience healing in our being, as our being is not just us anymore. It's now something bigger; it's part of God. It's into God. It's sharing in what God is. **This is what Jesus wanted to share with us.** And the more we drink this in, the more we contemplate about this, think about it, reflect upon it, the more we let it change us, the more joyful and the more happy and the more energized we will be. This the good news of Jesus Christ.