

Zombies are all the rage, it would seem. Whether it's television, movies, or books. The "un-dead" have captured the imagination of Americans. And the entertainment industry knows how to exploit a good thing, and how to make a buck off of it. Even the US Government, never one to shy away from wasting money, has an entire website at the Centers for Disease Control dedicated to surviving the zombie apocalypse. Just in case Hollywood should be based on actual science or fact.

Zombies, of course, are "the undead." Corpses animated by ... well, anything from a voodoo princess, to a space virus. They're hungry, and they want to eat you. They aren't smart, they aren't fast, but there sure seem to be an awful lot of them. And they don't easily give up.

Being "un-dead," Zombies are lacking a soul. And lacking a soul, they are missing certain essential faculties of the soul: namely, intelligence or the will. Intelligence, or our sense of reason, allows us to think outside of base instincts ... and to discern right from wrong. And our will, which allows us to choose - is the force for action that directs us to do what is right ... or in some cases, what is wrong.

In today's reading from Ezekiel, we might make the mistake on first hearing it that God is speaking to Israel about something only worthy of pop culture television.

*O my people, I will open your graves
and have you rise from them*

But far from re-animating a corpse - that is, a soul-less body ... the Lord is going one step further in saying:

I will put my spirit in you that you may live

There are two images that this brings to mind. (1) the creation account of the first man, where God

blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and the [first] man became a living being

This prophecy, when viewed in this light, is an act of creation.

The second Scriptural image is (2) the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Where the Apostles and the Virgin Mary received the Holy Spirit in power ... and by this force, the Church ... which is the Body of Christ ... was born.

And so, Ezekiel's prophecy points us to the beginning of creation as well as to a future new creation.

Saint Paul continues the theme of the zombie apocalypse in that he points out that despite our continued tendency toward sin, we are to live in the spirit because,

the Spirit of God dwells in [us]

and because of that,

Christ is in [us]

and because we share in the spirit

who raised Jesus from the dead

then we, look forward to the resurrection from the dead.

In the Gospel, Jesus raises Lazarus. And this story is well-known. But it is a high-point in Jesus' ministry, because having set His face toward Jerusalem, Jesus enters into "enemy territory" in order to do his last and greatest miracle.

This fact is hidden in the line from St. Thomas - doubting Thomas, who we'll hear about the weekend after Easter. But even before Jesus' resurrection ... even before his passion and death ... even before his arrest ... the disciples knew that there was a conspiracy to kill Him. And as they head to Martha and Mary's ... Thomas says:

Let us also go to die with him.

In other words Thomas is expressing the thoughts of the other Apostles. Bethany is near Jerusalem. The leaders in Jerusalem are planning on killing Jesus. And instead of expecting the miracle which we might take for granted (after having heard it so many times) ... the Apostles are expecting to be arrested and killed.

And so, while this event from the life of Christ shows us that He has power over life and death - even before His passion, death, and resurrection ... it also shows us that He has power in the face of His enemies.

In our own day and age, there are many contrary forces who would lead us away from the Gospel of Jesus. They would have us believe that we are living in jeopardy ... or that Jesus is just a nice idea ... or that Jesus was just another ordinary guy.

But Jesus came to free us from sin. Jesus came, not to give us the spirit of the world, but to give us the spirit of God to live within us. Jesus came in the power of the spirit to face life's difficulties, and to stand up to fear, and temptation, and sin ... with the power of God's love, and mercy, and forgiveness.

Through our Baptism, we have received the spirit of God and the supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love. Through our Confirmation, we have been strengthened in the power of the Holy Spirit, and empowered to spread the Gospel to the world. This is not a mere re-animation ... it is a re-birth, and a re-creation.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us pray for a renewal of the graces of our own Baptism, and ask to be re-born and re-created in the Spirit of God. Let us move forward, whatever our difficulties, and embrace our cross ... no matter how daunting it may seem. And in the power of God, and filled with the Spirit, let us go forward with Jesus ... not to die ... but to live!