

Points to Help Homily Preparation from a JPIC Perspective

Readings of the 5th Sunday of Lent - Sunday, March 29, 2009

(Readings from Year A for parishes with RCIA programs)

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Romans 8:1-8

John 11:1-45

Despite the length of today's Gospel (the death and raising of Lazarus), it does seem unfortunate that we do not hear a few more of its verses.

After the words "Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what [Jesus] had done began to believe in him..." we have the fascinating story of a meeting called by the Sanhedrin.

From their point of view, matters had come to an impossible juncture with relation to this Jesus of Nazareth. "If he continues," they tell one another at that gathering, "the whole world will follow him and the Romans will come and take away our temple and sweep away our nation."

Then Caiaphas, the High Priest that year, makes clear the political observation which will cause them to "seek a way to kill [Jesus]": "Do you not realize that it is better for one person to die than for the whole nation to perish?"

Every person who has ever seriously challenged unjust social constructs has been on the receiving end of such a political calculus and its logical consequences. For example, we have just commemorated the 29th anniversary of Archbishop Oscar Romero's assassination for the very same reason: he became too much of a threat to the unjust and violent status quo of his country, El Salvador.

Jesus, Oscar and all who have been judged dangerous to the prevailing system did not die because they were preaching consoling words; they preached truth to power and power could do no other but crush them.

As we approach Holy Week 2009, may our prayer be that people of faith today will likewise speak truth to power, especially those among us - popes, bishops, priests, religious, laity - who have access to our pulpits. Not to do so is to betray this legacy which Jesus has left us.

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