

### ***Homily for March 28<sup>th</sup> 2017***

The reading we just heard from Ezekiel is best interpreted when something of the Prophet's situation is known. Around the year 598 BC the Babylonians deported the elite of Jerusalem to Babylon. Within the decade, by the year 588, the Temple and much of the City of Jerusalem lay in ruins. Ezekiel would have left Jerusalem during the earlier deportation of 598 for he was a highly educated Jew, son of Buzi (Ez 1:3) belonged to the priestly class.

From Babylon he would have heard about the Temple's destruction. In this evening's reading he has a hope filled message. God is not done with his Temple and the day will come when the presence of the Lord will flow from the Temple like a life giving river. The river is actually representative of the Lord and we are told:

***“Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes.”***

This life-giving water transforms a hostile environment, an ecosystem that cannot sustain life, into its opposite. Everything it touches is renewed and recreated, to produce and nurture life. The trees grow along the path of the living water, offering to the readers a flashback to the moment of creation and forward to a new paradise, a paradise that will be seen in the very last book of the Bible where we are given a similar vision to the one found in Ezekiel. In Revelation 22 are these words:

***Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.***

Now the River isn't flowing from the Temple but from the throne of God.

In the Semitic culture of the sixth century B.C., the notion of water is fundamental. It is the very essence and substance of life, especially in the arid areas of the Ancient Near East. The living water nurtures the trees and plants, producing a marvelous garden of life. It sustains the aquatic animals, making it possible for them to live in a hostile environment.

The purpose of creating images is to establish an ecosystem where humankind can have all the necessary means to subsist and have a good life.

Now in the Gospel we read of a man who was also at healing waters. The pool of Bethsaida means the “pool of mercy”. Jesus though will not use the waters to heal the man who had been paralysed for 38 years. 38 years was how long the Jewish people were in the desert after they chose not to enter into the Promised Land because of fear. Therefore this man is representative of all those who in fear are kept from trusting Jesus and swimming in the mercy of grace of Christ. Another way to hear Jesus question is to ask,

***“will you trust me so you can be made whole”?***

What is trust like? Well it is like Ezekiel’s experience of the river of life flowing from the Temple. Some trust Jesus enough to only get wet to the ankles. Others trust him enough to get knee deep. Others up to their waists and then some are willing to swim in the mercy and grace of Christ. They choose to go all in.

This is the kind of trust that understands our deepening conversion requires that we not make excuses because of our past, but rather we daily choose to cooperate with Jesus as he continues to heal and make us whole.

His grace is abundant as the image of the river so vividly illustrates. Our choice is one where we decide how deep we will wade into the flow of his healing grace and mercy so that we can affirm with the Psalmist,

***The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.***