

**FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT**  
**Year A     April 6, 2014**

**Theme: “Dem Dry Bones”**

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We have used several American spiritual hymns tunes for our Eucharistic acclamations throughout the Lenten season.

But one tune we have not heard is this one. *(If you please, Carrie)*

*Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones.*  
*Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones.*  
*Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones.*  
*Now hear the word of the Lord.*

This melody was composed by African-American author and songwriter James Weldon Johnson and the lyrics are based on the stunning prophecy of Ezekiel we heard this morning.

Ezekiel wrote of his vision of being in the center of a broad valley filled with dried bones as far as he could see.

God told him to prophesy over the bones and tell the bones to hear the word of the Lord.

Suddenly there was rattling and clanking and clinking as loud as thunder and -- low and behold -- what did Ezekiel see?

*The foot bone connected to the ankle bone,*  
*The ankle bone connected to the leg bone,*  
*The leg bone connected to the knee bone,*  
*Now hear the word of the Lord.*

So what was going on here?

You see, Ezekiel was among those who had been carried off from Jerusalem as a slave when that city was conquered by the Babylonians.

He saw his people, destroyed, dying and being buried in the foreign land; but he also saw the day coming when God would restore and bring new life to God's own people.

Announced the prophet:

**“O my people, I will open your graves  
and have you rise from them,  
and bring you back to the land of Israel.”**

Ezekiel gives voice to a vision of God's mercy and goodness that goes beyond even boundaries of present life, a mercy and goodness that included opening their graves and raising his people from death.

**“O my people!  
I will put my spirit in you that you may live...”**

*The knee bone connected to the thigh bone,  
The thigh bone connected to the hip bone,  
The hip bone connected to the back bone,  
Now hear the word of the Lord.*

Ezekiel declared that God would put God's own spirit in “Dem dry bones” and bring them to life again.

St. Paul knew what would happen if God's Spirit invaded “dem bones”.

He wrote to the Romans as we heard today:

**“If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead  
dwells in you, the one who raised Jesus from the dead will  
give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit dwelling in  
you.”**

If the life-giving Spirit who raised Jesus is embedded in us, then we can count on that Spirit to raise us from the dead too.

Allow me a homey example.

As I speak, daffodils, tulips, hyacinths and other bulb plants are bursting into life.

They spent the cold, snowy winter buried in the dark earth.

Yet, deep inside each bulb was the 'spirit' of life and when the warm voice of the Spring sun called, they heard and sprang from their winter graves.

*The backbone connected to the shoulder bone.*

*The shoulder bone connected to the neck bone.*

*The neck bone connected to the head bone.*

*Now hear the word of the Lord.*

Finally we come to the centerpiece of this Fifth Sunday of Lent, last and greatest of Jesus' signs in John's Gospel, the raising of Lazarus.

He stood at the tomb of his four-days-dead friend and cried out:  
**"Lazarus, come out! And the dead man came out."**

The Gospel of John is then is as incredulous as we might have been standing there: **"And the dead man came out."**

But perhaps as astounding as the sign are the words spoken by Jesus to the dead man sister, Martha:

**"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even if he dies will live. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die."**

Our beloved dead are to live again.

And we who are alive will never die.

Whoa!

This means it will be at our graves that Jesus will stand and he will cry out in a loud voice:

Larry, come out!

\_\_\_\_, come out!

And Larry, and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ will come out!

***Dem bones, dem bones gonna rise again.***

***Dem bones, dem bones gonna rise again.***

***Dem bones, dem bones gonna rise again.***

***Now hear the word of the Lord.***