

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (3/21-22/2009)

II Chronicles 36/14-23, Psalm 137, Ephesians 2/4-10, John 3/14-21

One of the best “feel-good” stories we have come across in a long time is the heroic behavior of Capt. Chesley Sullenberger and his crew aboard US Airways flight 1549 when the airliner lost power and had to ditch in the Hudson River.

Thanks to the professionalism and calmness of this crew and a host of boats who came to the rescue within minutes, over 150 people were saved from sure death.

To think that in such an accident, not one life was lost is almost unbelievable.

We value life – even one life; as a result, when a number of lives are saved, we have nothing but awe and gratitude for those who made it happen.

In the Gospel passage today, Jesus engages in a discourse with the Pharisee, Nicodemus, a man who shows some openness to Jesus and his teaching.

Jesus talks about life.

All who believe in Jesus and what he has to say will have eternal life.

“Eternal life” is a concept we shall revisit often at liturgies during the Lenten, Easter and post-Easter seasons.

What does it mean?

It is obvious that Jesus saw life and death in their deepest and most real dimensions.

Not just the surface as you and I see and know life and death, but its most profound connection to the very life of God.

He promised that if we believe in him, accept who he truly is - the Son of God – we may have a share in God’s way of living.

If we do not accept him, then we are not accepting his words, and therefore we cannot share in that divine life.

In a sense, the gift of eternal life is presented to us for our acceptance or rejection.

Someone may say that eternal life is like a carrot dangled by the early church to keep people in line, to give them some motivation to stay on the straight and narrow.

If they had it, well and good; if they didn’t, then there wasn’t much hope for the future.

That’s not how Jesus presented it.

With great conviction, he pointed out the difference between our lives here and our life with God.

Not with God in the sweet bye-and-bye, but with God now.

Eternal life begins here, just as faith in Jesus begins here.

Jesus says that whoever lives and believes in him will never die!

We know he’s not talking about physical death – that’s a given.

In the end, we are dealing with a mystery – God’s life wrapped up in ours.

The proof of this mystery – if proof there can be – is Jesus himself.

He came to bring us life, God’s life. He brought it. It’s ours!

Do you recognize that divine life around you?

Do you recognize Jesus, the giver of life, in your midst?

Well, do you?