

Prayer at Home

5th Sunday of Lent (Yr A)

*Gather with family or on your own. Place an opened Bible on a table.
Light a candle and place a crucifix beside it.*

Begin with:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We hunger for the Bread of Life. Lord, be our nourishment:

I am the living bread, that came down from heaven, says the Lord.
Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever,
and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.

Let us prepare ourselves to truly hear God's Word:

I confess to almighty God and you here present,
That I have sinned through my own fault;
In my thoughts and in my words,
In what I have done and what I have failed to do;
And I ask blessed Mary, ever Virgin,
All the angels and saints,
And you here present to pray for me to the Lord our God.

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and
bring us to ever-lasting life.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy
Lord, have mercy

Let us pray:

Merciful God,
You showed your glory to our fallen race
by sending your Son to confound the powers of death.

Call us forth from sin's dark tomb.
Break the bonds which hold us,
that we may believe and proclaim Christ,
the cause of our freedom
and the source of life,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
holy and mighty God for ever and ever. Amen

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 37:12-14 (JB)

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel
I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live.

The Lord says this: I am going to open your graves; I mean to raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live, and I shall resettle you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this - it is the Lord who speaks.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 129 (JB)

R. With the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ear be attentive
to the voice of my pleading. **R.**

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness:
for this we revere you. **R.**

My soul is waiting for the Lord,
I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord
more than watchman for daybreak.
Let the watchman count on daybreak
and Israel on the Lord. **R.**

Because with the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption,
Israel indeed he will redeem
from all its iniquity. **R.**

SECOND READING

Romans 8:8-11(JB)

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he will give life to your own mortal bodies.

People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. Your interests, however, are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to him. Though your body may be dead it is because of sin, but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 11:25, 26 (JB)

Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord;
whoever believes in me will not die for ever.
Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

GOSPEL

John 11:1-45 (JB)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

I am the resurrection and the life.

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. - It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, "Lord, the man you love is ill." On receiving the message, Jesus said, "This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified."

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, "Let us go to Judaea." The disciples said, "Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?" Jesus replied:

"Are there not twelve hours in the day?
A man can walk in the daytime without stumbling
because he has the light of this world to see by;
but if he walks at night he stumbles,
because there is no light to guide him."

He said that and then added, "Our friend Lazarus is resting, I am going to wake him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he is able to rest he is sure to get better." The phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by 'rest' he meant 'sleep', so Jesus put it plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let us go to him." Then Thomas - known as the Twin - said to the other disciples, "Let us go too, and die with him."

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you." "Your brother," said Jesus to her "will rise again." Martha said, "I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said:

"I am the resurrection and the life.

If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live,
and whoever lives and believes in me
will never die.

Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she said, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world."

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, "The Master is here and wants to see you." Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, "Where have you put him?" They said, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept; and the Jews said, "See how much he loved him!" But there were some who remarked, "He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?" Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, "Take the stone away." Martha said to him, "Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day." Jesus replied, "Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone.

Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

"Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.

I knew indeed that you always hear me,
but I speak

for the sake of all these who stand round me,

so that they may believe it was you who sent me."

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, "Lazarus, here! Come out!"
The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, let him go free."
Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

HOMILY

"Take the stone away."
"Lazarus, here! Come out!"
"Unbind him. Let him go free."

These are the three central and powerful statements of Jesus in the drama of the Lazarus story.

"Take the stone away."
"Lazarus, here! Come out!"
"Unbind him. Let him go free."

Tombs are dark places. No light, no life.
Tombs are suffocating places. No air, no breath.
Tombs keep life on the outside, at a distance.
Tombs keep death on the inside, closed in, near at hand.
Tombs are not just places for the dead;
sometimes the living dwell there to.

In these day, we experience tombs of fear:
Social tombs of desolation, separation and isolation;
Economic tombs of unemployment, financial hardship, deep insecurity;
Psychological tombs of guilt, anger, and denial;
Emotional tombs of distress, hurt, and pain.

These are like a death.
Life and light are outside; they seem beyond our reach. The world has closed in on us. There is a heavy stone in the way which is keeping us all imprisoned, with the fear, that in one way or another, we have one foot in the grave already.

We long to hear the words, "Take this heavy stone away."

How is this stone rolled away?
No matter how hard we try, we cannot roll the stone away by ourselves. We need God. We need grace. We need the grace that comes to us in the shape of other human beings.

Things maybe seem as though they are closing in on us but that is the deception of the tomb.

The promise of Jesus remains and stones, even heavy ones, can still be rolled away.

The stone is rolled away by the heart that is open.
It is rolled away by a word of connection.
It is rolled away by acts of generosity.
It is rolled away by a gesture of solidarity.
It is rolled away by the accompaniment of friendship.
It is rolled away by the gift of mercy.
It is rolled away by the offering of peace.
It is rolled away by the graciousness of love.
It is rolled away by the shouldering of grief.
It is rolled away by the grace of trust.

Then something beyond us begins to draw us out of ourselves. For the moment, we must remain separated but the longing in hearts grows. We ache to hear the words, "Come out".

"Unbind them. Let them go free."

Emerging from our own tombs will be a long process and we will need one another and the grace of God. It will be gradual; step by step. Part of the path toward renewing our own lives will be helping others to renew theirs. As we help others become free others, we receive from them the grace of freedom and life:

Through a word of connection.
Through acts of generosity.
Through a gesture of solidarity.
Through the accompaniment of friendship.
Through the gift of mercy.
Through the offering of peace.
Through the graciousness of love.
Through the shouldering of grief.
Through the grace of trust.

Together we seek the newness of life which God offers.

Even in the midst of all this darkness, the days of Easter glory are almost upon us. Are we see the connection between this time and the story of Lazarus?

There is life beyond the tombs, which we the living, dwell in. We might be locked in, but let us not lose sight of Jesus who is standing at the doorway, at the threshold, standing over our open wounds, calming our bleak uncertainties and rampant fears, calling us back to life.

"Take the stone away."

"Come out!"

"Be unbound. Go free."

APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
At the words that follow, up to and including 'the Virgin Mary', all bow.
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Intro: Sisters and brothers, during this Lenten time, we seek to strengthen our trust in God's faithful promises.

For the Church; that in this time of famine and isolation, we may grow evermore hungry for Jesus, the true Bread of Life. LORD, HEAR US.

For our world; that our fears may not overwhelm us and that the well-being of the whole human family may be protected. LORD, HEAR US.

For our diocese; that our communities may become the Bread of Life by supporting one another and caring for the most vulnerable and in need. LORD, HEAR US.

For those who work in government, healthcare and public service; that by working together, the safety of all and the common good of society may be the fruits of their labours and the reward of their work. LORD, HEAR US.

For the isolated, elderly and frail; that in these times of uncertainty, they may be strengthened by the prayers of the church. LORD OF LIFE, HEAR US.

For all those who have died, especially through the Coronavirus and those who mourn them; may they be greeted by the mercy Word, Jesus Christ and be accompanied into eternal life by Mary and all the saints. LORD, HEAR US.

Almighty and all-merciful God,
lover of the human race, healer of all our wounds,
in whom there is no shadow of death,
save us in this time of crisis;
grant wisdom and courage to our leaders;
watch over all medical people
as they tend the sick and work for a cure;
stir in us a sense of solidarity beyond all isolation;
if our doors are closed, let our hearts be open.
By the power of your love destroy the virus of fear,
that hope may never die
and the light of Easter, the triumph of life,
may shine upon us and the whole world.
Through Jesus Christ, the Lord risen from the dead,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

***Holy Mary, health of the sick, pray for us.
St Joseph, guardian of us all, pray for us.***

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Let us pray

We pray, almighty God,
that we may always be counted among the members of Christ,
in whose Body and Blood we have communion.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Lord God,
Strength of the weary, medicine of the weak,
Be near to us as we call on you.
May our nourishment during this time and renew us daily in your love.

May God bless us, keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.