

READINGS FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, 2020 – REFLECTION AND INTERCESSIONS

A READING FROM THE PROPHET EZEKIEL 37: 12-14

(Contemporary English Version, CEV)

So tell them, “I, the LORD God, promise to open your graves and set you free. I will bring you back to Israel, and when that happens, you will realize that I am the LORD. My Spirit will give you breath, and you will live again. I will bring you home, and you will know that I have kept my promise. I, the LORD, have spoken.”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM – PSALM 129

(The Grail. 1963)

Response: 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.

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

My soul is waiting for the Lord; I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord – more than a watchman for daybreak.
Let the watchman count on daybreak and Israel on the Lord.

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

Response: With the Lord, there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE ROMANS 8:8-11

(CEV)

If we follow our desires, we cannot please God.
God’s Spirit lives in you so you need no longer ruled by your desires.
People who don’t have the Spirit of Christ in them don’t belong to him,
but Christ lives in you.
You are alive because God has accepted you,
even though your bodies must die because of your sins.
God raised Jesus to life and God’s Spirit now lives in you.
He will raise you to life by his Spirit.

*I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE, SAYS THE LORD.
WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME WILL NOT DIE FOREVER. (John 11:25,26)*

The Death of Lazarus

A man by the name of Lazarus was sick in the village of Bethany. He had two sisters, Mary and Martha. The sisters sent a message to the Lord and told him that his good friend Lazarus was sick.

When Jesus heard this, he said,

“His sickness won’t end in death. It will bring glory to God and his Son.”

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and brother, but he stayed where he was for two more days. Then he said to his disciples, “Now we will go back to Judea.”

Jesus Brings Lazarus to Life

When Jesus got to Bethany, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many people had come from the city to comfort Martha and Mary because their brother had died.

When Martha heard that Jesus had arrived, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house. Martha said to Jesus,

“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Yet even now I know that God will do anything you ask.”

Jesus told her, “Your brother will live again!”

Martha answered, “I know that he will be raised to life on the last day, when all the dead are raised.”

Jesus said, “I am the one who raises the dead to life!

Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die.

Everyone who lives with faith in me will never really die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord!” she replied. “I believe that you are Christ, the Son of God.

You are the one we hoped would come into the world.”

When Jesus saw Mary and the people with her were crying,

he was terribly upset and asked, “Where have you put his body?”

They replied, “Lord, come and you will see.”

Jesus started crying, and the people said, “See how much he loved Lazarus.”

Some of them said,

“He gives sight to the blind. Why couldn’t he have kept Lazarus from dying?”

Jesus was still terribly upset. He went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone rolled against the entrance and told the people to roll the stone away.

But Martha said,

“Lord, you know Lazarus has been dead four days. There will be a bad smell.” Jesus replied, “Didn’t I tell you that with faith, you will see the glory of God?”

After the stone had been rolled aside, Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed, “Father, I thank you for answering my prayer. You always answer my prayers. I said this, so that the people here would believe that you sent me.”

When Jesus had finished praying, he shouted, “Lazarus, come out!”

The man who had been dead came out.

His hands and feet were wrapped with strips of burial cloth, and a cloth covered his face.

Jesus then told the people, “Untie him and let him go.”

Many of the people who had come to visit Mary saw the things that Jesus did, and they put their faith in him.

REFLECTION – taken from Patricia Stevenson RSJ www.sosj.org.au/Lent-5thSunday-YearA.pdf

In Ezekiel’s vision, the bones of exiled Jews - those slain in battle - rattled as the sinews, muscles, skin and identity of God’s vanquished people were being restored. However, they needed the breath of the Spirit of God within them to inspire and guide them, and to lead them to their own homeland.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus revealed to Martha a new vision for her in her suffering at the death of her beloved brother Lazarus. As with some Jews at that time – and many Christians still today - Martha believed resurrection was relevant only for the last days.

To Martha and to us today, John presents Jesus revealing the presence of God in our lives as a present reality, not just as a future event. The resurrection is about the power of the divine life embracing and transforming all existence, including our human circumstances. God’s gifts to which we can respond in our lives will transcend every good and hard thing life will throw at us. At Easter, we reflect on how this was true in Jesus’ own life, transcending even the tragedy of his own human death.

Life is throwing so much at people today personally, and in our local and global communities. Let us seek the inspiration of the Spirit of God in the midst of all that is happening. With faith in the Resurrection as a present reality, not just as a future event, with hope and love, let us come to God as we are. God will be with us each new day.

**Let us trust in Jesus who loved his friends
and prayed for their openness to God in their lives.**

1.

That people and the environments ravaged by the Coronavirus or droughts, bush fires and floods this year, may find protection, healing and support for a just and viable future.

Lord, hear our prayer.

2.

That despite how Coronavirus is impeding how the Church's nourishes the Baptized, may Holy Week and Easter will be a time of renewal for how we and all members of the Church walk in the footsteps of Jesus who trusted his Father.

Lord, hear our prayer.

3.

That, we Australians will continue to pray for and seek justice for the victims, bystanders and perpetrators of evil identified by the eleven Royal Commissions in our recent Australian history.

Lord, hear our prayer.

4.

That families with poor financial means and health concerns spending the next weeks at home will get the support they need, will be alert to the Holy Spirit in their lives and will share goodness, learning, fun and safety in all they do.

Lord, hear our prayer.

5.

That all we do - personally or together - with our own and shared faith in Christ will contribute to the mission of Jesus in our Australian society, in this change of era.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

6.

That adults and children living with illness and all people facing their death will be blessed with all they need to be at peace. May all who have gone to God pray with Mary, the mother of Jesus, for people in need, especially those who have no one to pray for them.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

**God of compassion and wisdom
Teach us Your ways; lead us through our needs.
Through Christ our Lord. AMEN.**