

Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT / A

26 MARCH 2023

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.'

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.

Longer form, 11:1-45

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GOD'S PLEDGE TO US

Lent is always an invitation to travel on the path of conversion. We are called to do our part and yet the work is not solely ours. One of the threads uniting today's readings is the encouragement provided by God's pledge to work with us as we journey towards the new life of Easter.

Ezekiel wrote to a dispirited and discouraged people far from where they wanted to be. In exile they felt powerless to change their situation and wondered whether God still had the power, or desire, to save them. Ezekiel has no doubts that God will bring them back from the grave to new life.

In writing to the Christians of Rome, Paul is led to reflect on the nature of conversion and the Christian life from two perspectives. From our perspective, we are challenged to open our hearts to what is of spiritual and lasting value. Lest we become disheartened by our weakness, Paul reminds us of the critical role God plays in our coming to spiritual maturity. The gift of the Spirit within us is a sign of God's pledge to enliven us so that we may share in the new life of Jesus' resurrection.

The moving story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is a powerful reminder to us all that just as Jesus commanded, 'Unbind him, let him go free,' so it is with us. The Lord is still working with us to liberate what is bound, and to bring to life that which is not fully alive.



Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Ezek 37:12-14

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel

I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live.

The Lord says this: I am now 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.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 129. R. v. 7

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

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord, / Lord, hear my voice! / O let your ears be attentive / to the voice of my pleading. **R.**
2. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, / Lord, who would survive? / But with you is found forgiveness: / for this we revere you. **R.**
3. 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.**
4. Because with the Lord there is mercy / and fullness of redemption, / Israel indeed he will redeem / from all its iniquity. **R.**

SECOND READING

Rom 8:8-11

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.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 11:25, 26

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

Jn 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33-45.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

I am the resurrection and the life.

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.'

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. 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,