



# LIVING THE GOSPEL

**Fifth Sunday of Lent  
March 22, 2026**

**Theme: "I am the resurrection and the life."**

---

## **Gathering Prayer**

**Facilitator:** By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: John 11:3-7,17,20-27,33b-45**

<sup>3</sup> The sisters sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill.' <sup>4</sup> 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.'

<sup>5</sup> Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup> yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days <sup>7</sup> before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judaea.'

<sup>17</sup> On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. <sup>18</sup> Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, <sup>22</sup> but I know that even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' <sup>23</sup> 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' <sup>24</sup> Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' <sup>25</sup> Jesus said:

'I am the resurrection and the life.

If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live,

<sup>26</sup> And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this?'

<sup>27</sup> 'Yes Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.' <sup>33</sup> 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,

<sup>34</sup> 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept; <sup>36</sup> and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' <sup>37</sup> But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?'

<sup>38</sup> Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.'

Martha said to him 'Lord by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' <sup>40</sup> Jesus replied 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.

<sup>42</sup> 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.'

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' <sup>44</sup> 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.'

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

## **Gospel Focus**

On the last Sunday before Holy Week, we reach the zenith of Jesus' ministry and his greatest miracle. For the second week in a row, the gospel reading from John shows Jesus asking an incredibly direct question. Again, the actions of Jesus prompt a decision. Jesus return to Bethany upon hearing that Lazarus has died, meeting the grieving Martha and Mary. At first, with a mixture of sadness, hope and maybe a pinch of accusation, they each say in turn, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Martha in particular seems to hold on to faith and doubt, as she again questions Jesus as they approach the tomb. Jesus' response is on the one hand consolatory but on the other is quite pointed. Jesus both questions Martha's faith and invites her deeper into it. The Scriptures do the same to us as we approach the liturgical commemoration of Jesus' passion and death. As the letter to the Hebrews warns, "the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12). Do *you* believe that you will see the glory of God?"

## **Gospel Reflection**

One thing you want to be able to depend upon is that your loved ones will be with you in time of need. So the most puzzling part of today's gospel is that Jesus does not go right away to be with his dear friend Lazarus and his sisters, after he receives word of Lazarus illness. Why does he delay? Martha says to him forthrightly, "Lord if you have been here, my brother would not have died" (v.21), and soon afterward her sister confronts him with the same complaint (v.32). Later, the onlookers ask, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" (v.37). The troubling question, voiced here times, is: Where is Jesus when you need him?

It adds to the puzzlement that at other times in the Gospel of John, Jesus does come to the aid of persons in need of healing: the royal official's son in Capernaum (4:46-54), a man who was paralyzed at the pool of Bethesda(5:1-18), and a man born blind near the pool of Siloam (9:1-41). Why would Jesus extend himself to these people and not to his close friends?

The two days Jesus delayed in going to Bethany may have been time that he needed to discern whether it was the hour for him to take this fatal step. It is clear that to go to Judea would put Jesus at great risk. His disciples twice try to dissuade him from going there (11:7-8, 12). Thomas's wry remark, "Let us also go to die with him" (11:16), proves to be exactly true; the chapter ends with the Sanhedrin planning to put Jesus to death (11:53).

As Jesus' followers try to build communities of equal disciples, it is challenging to embrace as friends those who are not kin and to those whom they are not naturally drawn. It is even more difficult to be willing to lay down one's life for any of those befriended, as Jesus does. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus mission is to bring life to the full for all (10:10) by offering friendship to all persons and drawing them to himself

(12:32). Jesu loves Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (vv.3, 5, 35). But he also loves all person-to the death. There are no favorites or best friends. The anonymous Beloved Disciple stands for each person who allows himself to be loved by Jesus and to love him in return. All of us beloved of Jesus can put ourselves in the place of the one who rests on Jesus' bosom (13:23).

When one chooses to abide in Jesus, then he is always present, even if not in the same physical, earthly way the first beloved disciples wanted him to be. As Martha professes her belief in the risen One, she affirms that he is always truly present and that all who die believing in him are likewise living and present still. Such belief does not take away grief for the dearly departed but turns our mourning into hope-filled joy.

## **Old and New Testament links**

### **First Reading — Ezekiel 37:12-14**

<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And <sup>14</sup> 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.

### **Responsorial Reading — Psalm 130:1-8**

***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 ears 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**

<sup>8</sup> People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. <sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> 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; <sup>11</sup> 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.

## **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

**439.** Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic "Son of David", promised by God to

Israel.(Cf Mt 2:2; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9.15) Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political.(Cf. Jn 4:25-26; 6:15; 11:27; Mt 22:41-46; Lk 24:21)

**627.** Christ's death was a real death in that it put an end to his earthly human existence. But because of the union which the person of the Son retained with his body, his was not a mortal corpse like others, for "it was not possible for death to hold him" (Acts 2:24) <sup>NT</sup> and therefore "divine power preserved Christ's body from corruption." Both of these statements can be said of Christ: "He was cut off out of the land of the living", (St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 51, 3) and "My flesh will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor let your Holy One see corruption." (Isa 53:8) Jesus' resurrection "on the third day" was the sign of this, also because bodily decay was held to begin on the fourth day after death.(Acts 2:26-27; cf. Ps 16:9-10)

**993.** The Pharisees and many of the Lord's contemporaries hoped for the resurrection. Jesus teaches it firmly. To the Sadducees who deny it he answers, "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God?" (Mk 12:24; cf. Jn 11:24; Acts 23:6) Faith in the resurrection rests on faith in God who "is not God of the dead, but of the living." (Mk 12:27)

**994.** But there is more. Jesus links faith in the resurrection to his own person: "I am the Resurrection and the life." (Jn 11:25) It is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him, who have eaten his body and drunk his blood.(Cf. Jn 5:24-25; 6:40,54) Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of this by restoring some of the dead to life,(Cf. Mk 5:21-42; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11) announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order. He speaks of this unique event as the "sign of Jonah," (Mt 12:39) the sign of the temple: he announces that he will be put to death but rise thereafter on the third day.(Cf. Mk 10:34; Jn 2:19-22)

**2604.** The second prayer, before the raising of Lazarus, is recorded by St. John.(Cf. Jn 11:41-42) Thanksgiving precedes the event: "Father, I thank you for having heard me," which implies that the Father always hears his petitions. Jesus immediately adds: "I know that you always hear me," which implies that Jesus, on his part, *constantly made such petitions*. Jesus' prayer, characterized by thanksgiving, reveals to us how to ask: *before* the gift is given, Jesus commits himself to the One who in giving gives himself. The Giver is more precious than the gift; he is the "treasure"; in him abides his Son's heart; the gift is given "as well." (Mt 6:21, 33)

The priestly prayer of Jesus holds a unique place in the economy of salvation.(Cf. Jn 17) A meditation on it will conclude Section One. It reveals the ever present prayer of our High Priest and, at the same time, contains what he teaches us about our prayer to our Father, which will be developed in Section Two.

### **Sharing and Discussion**

1. With which of the people in this incident do you most identify?
2. How have you experienced comfort in the loss of a loved one?
3. How would you answer Jesus' question in verse 26?

### **Closing Prayer**

**Facilitator:** Loving God, you tell us that all will know your works by your wondrous deeds. Hear these prayers we offer today and answer them in the way that you know best. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen