

First reading Ezekiel 37: 12-14

'I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live.'

Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm 130(129):1-8. R7bc

With the Lord there is mercy, in him is plentiful redemption.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive
to the sound of my pleadings.

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?

But with you is found forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

I long for you, O Lord,
my soul longs for his word.

My soul awaits the Lord
more than watchmen for daybreak.

More than watchmen for daybreak,
let Israel hope for the Lord.

For with the Lord there is mercy,
in him is plentiful redemption.

It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Second reading Romans 8:8-11

'The Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you.'

Brothers and Sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Gospel Acclamation John 11:25a,26

Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord.
Everyone who believes in me shall never die.

Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

Gospel John 11:1-45

'I am the resurrection and the life.'

At that time: A certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his

feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it he said, 'This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.'

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.' After saying these things, he said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.' Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.' Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, by this time there will be a smell, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.' The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.' Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

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Feast Days this week

Monday 23rd March: St Turibus of Mongrovejo

Wednesday 25th March: The Annunciation of the Lord

The Cycle of Prayer

Candidates for the Sacraments

especially on the Sundays of Lent

Background

For those preparing to be initiated into the Church at Easter, Lent marks the final stage of preparation, the period of Purification and Enlightenment. It begins with the Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent. During the season of Lent the Scrutinies are celebrated on the

Living life to the full

It seems a bit strange to have this gospel on the Fifth Sunday of Lent. It seems to be clearly about the resurrection and yet we are still plodding through Lent and have to get through Good Friday before we get to Easter. What's going on; have the Church's liturgical engineers got it all wrong? Can I suggest that this text is more about death than resurrection? After all, Lazarus isn't walking around today; he had to undergo another death. This text is more about our life and death here and now rather than about the resurrection. We will have time enough to consider the resurrection when we get to Easter Sunday and the weeks of celebration afterwards.

In his Spiritual Exercises St Ignatius Loyola suggests that when reading a particular Gospel passage we should put ourselves in the place of each character in turn and use our imagination to see how we would feel in those circumstances. This can be a most revealing exercise. How about putting myself in the place of Lazarus? I am dead to everything and then I hear a voice: 'Come out, Lazarus.' There I am, lying in a tomb swathed in bandages and surrounded by darkness. If we wonder how we would feel in this situation, the answer would be different for everyone but I think many might say: Thanks Lord, but I'd prefer to stay where I am.

While attempting to put ourselves imaginatively in Lazarus's place we might become aware of how tomb-like our present way of life is, and rekindle a longing for freedom which has perhaps been buried for years. Putting ourselves into the place of a character from scripture can awake all kinds of thoughts within us and lead us to turn to God in prayer with new words on our lips. Yet it is something so simple that we are surprised that we never thought about it ourselves. This Gospel features here in Lent to help us come to live life to the full; for often it is only in the face of death that we are shocked into this realisation. This can happen to us in all sorts of ways on the occasion of a loss or bereavement. It is amazing how often it takes overcoming a negative experience to make us realise afresh how much there is that is truly positive and makes life worth living. associationofcatholicpriests.ie

3rd, 4th and 5th Sundays in preparation for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil. Many parishes will also receive candidates for Reception into the Church.

"The people of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptised."

"During Lent, the period of purification and enlightenment, the faithful should take care to participate in the rites of the scrutinies and presentations and give the elect the example of their own renewal in the spirit of penance, faith, and charity. At the Easter Vigil, they should attach great importance to renewing their own baptismal promises." RCIA 9 The celebration of other Sacraments, such as Confirmation and First Holy Communion, will often take place within the Easter season so that candidates for these Sacraments will also be preparing in Lent. These candidates should also be remembered in the prayers of the community.

Prayer

*Father of love and power,
it is your will to establish everything in Christ
and to draw us into his all-embracing love.*

*Guide the elect of your Church:
strengthen them in their vocation,
build them into the kingdom of your Son,
and seal them with the Spirit of your promise.*

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults Roman Missal (adapted)