

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

(YEAR A)



Release Us by Your Spirit

God of all life,
who raised Lazarus from the dead,
and released the poor from
their suffering,
you lead us in the land of the living:
bless us and give us your Spirit,
your Spirit of generosity and holiness,
of life and of creative energy.
Lift us from our graves of sinfulness
and raise us from our dry and
wasteful ways.

May our sins be left behind
and our life in your Spirit bring us joy.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 17, 2024
Spirit Dwelling Within



Today's readings: Ezekiel 37:12–14; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8; Romans 8:8–11; John 11:1–45. The Spirit of God gives life. Today's readings emphasize the role of the Spirit in those apparently dead. Ezekiel emphasizes this image vividly: graves will be opened, and we will rise from them. That is only the beginning, though. God will settle us in our land by putting his Spirit within us.

Have you already died, buried in a grave of apathy, disillusionment, or sinfulness? Have you allowed a negative attitude to cut you off from God? If so, you have dug your grave. The first reading reminds us that God's Spirit is in us that we might live; and we are not just to live, but "settle" in the land of the living.

We who have been baptized carry within us the Spirit of Christ, as St. Paul reminds us in the second reading, and

therefore have life—Christ's life—dwelling in us. That is a reminder that we are sustained by our baptismal graces throughout our ups and downs, our joys and our failings. We do not need to remain in the graves we have dug. When we are open to the Spirit of God dwelling in us, we can take part in the new life that Christ offers.

Belief in Jesus as the resurrection and the life is at the heart of today's Gospel. In the dialogue between Jesus and Martha, Jesus states, "Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live." Martha, Mary, and Lazarus had lived the life of the Spirit of God. Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead, then, is an affirmation that the grave had no power over a life lived in the Spirit.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 18 Traps for Kindness

Even though Jesus was without sin, he did not condemn. How much more should we, with our failings and shortcomings, follow his example and offer a kind word instead of judgement. As we live these final days of Lent, let us practice kindness by complimenting others and refraining from critical words. *Today's readings: Daniel 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62; Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6; John 8:1–11.*

Tuesday, March 19 Feast of St. Joseph

“It was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham and his descendants that he would inherit the world, but through the righteousness that comes from faith,” we hear in today’s reading from Romans. The phrase “righteousness from faith” personifies St. Joseph, who was inclined to quietly divorce the pregnant Mary but followed the angel’s instruction and took her into his home. Have you considered looking to St. Joseph as a model of faith? *Today's readings: 2 Samuel 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27 and 29; Romans 4:13, 16–18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18–21, 24a or Luke 2:41–51a.*

Wednesday, March 20 Becoming Better

In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells his listeners that to be his disciples, they are to remain in his Word. Only by remaining in his Word will they know the truth and be set free from sin. Reading and meditating on Scripture is a regular practice of many to come closer to God during Lent. During your prayer time, ponder how you act out your discipleship. Are the people that you encounter aware that you are a Christian by the way you live? *Today's readings: Daniel 3:14–20, 91–92, 95; Psalm: Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; John 8:31–42.*

Thursday, March 21 Beyond Imagination

Abraham surely never imagined that God would come to him to make a covenant. It is beyond imagination that God would come to make “an everlasting pact.” Yet God promised the childless Abraham that he would be “the father of a host of nations.” God has a plan for each of us too. In the Gospel, we hear, “Whoever keeps my word will never see death.” To keep God’s Word is the work of each disciple. For that work, the reward is eternal life. *Today's readings: Genesis 17:3–9; Psalm 105:4–5, 6–7, 8–9; John 8:51–59.*

Friday, March 22 Do You Believe?

In the first reading, we hear the prophet Jeremiah say, “All those who were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine.” Jesus, too, knew that people who practiced their religion looked for reasons to arrest or stone him. Reminding them of the Father’s good works he had performed, he asked, “For which of these are you trying to stone me?” In the world today, who is being punished for their good works? How do you recognize the work and action of Jesus around you? *Today's readings: Jeremiah 20:10–13; Psalm 18:2–3a, 3bc–4, 5–6, 7; John 10:31–42.*

Saturday, March 23 All Praise to God

As we stand at the precipice of Holy Week, reflect on a time in your life when you turned away from God. Perhaps you felt persecuted or ashamed of your relationship with God. Many young people face this problem; they hide their faith because it is unpopular, yet our faith in God is not about popularity. How can we be examples of hope to the younger generation? How can you turn a tense moment into an opportunity to share God’s love and mercy? *Today's readings: Ezekiel 37:21–28; Psalm: Jeremiah 31:10, 11–12abcd, 13; John 11:45–56.*

