

The Work of the People

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

This Sunday we come to the last of the three preparatory Gospels that give us insight into who this Jesus, with whom we will walk through the difficulties of Holy Week, really is: the suffering servant of God. These Gospels also give us a clue as to how we are called to respond to the grace and mercy of God as it comes to us through Jesus.

In the First Reading this Sunday, Ezekiel announces to the people of the covenant God's fourfold promise to them: the graves of the dead will be opened; those who have died will be brought to life; the people in exile will be brought back to their land; and the spirit of God will be given to them. The promise of restoration prefigures the promise of Christ for all those who believe in him and sets up the Gospel story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The promise of God is affirmed in signs and in words: "I have promised and I will do it, says the Lord."

In Paul's theology of the body the word "flesh" could mean two things: the physical body or that part of human nature that is prone to sinfulness, as in the ways of the flesh. The opposite of this is the way of the spirit, the way of goodness and right judgment. In today's reading Paul denounces the way of the flesh, though he doesn't give examples as he does in other cases. It is the Spirit of Christ that overcomes the flesh and brings a new way of life to those who believe in him.

The story of the raising of Lazarus draws us into the human grief of a family and of Jesus himself. The story has more than one purpose and several layers of meaning. It is first a prelude to the death and resurrection experience of Jesus himself. Second, it includes another of John's "I am" statements, the declaration by Jesus of his identity, "I am the resurrection and the life." A third aspect of the story is Jesus' affirmation that those who believe in him will also rise to new life; death will not sever the bonds of relationship between Jesus and those he loves. Jesus brought comfort to Mary and Martha; his message brings comfort to us.

The reflection for this Sunday is from Rita Ferrone who is a writer and speaker about issues of liturgy, catechesis, and Church renewal.

I can never think of the Gospel of the raising of Lazarus without recalling two associations. One is liturgical. In the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, "Lazarus Sunday" is the Sunday of the Third Scrutiny. In this final rite of Lent, the elect (as the catechumens are now called) hear Christ proclaimed as Savior. He is the one who conquers

sin and death. Jesus says to Martha: "I am the resurrection." The elect—and by extension, all of us—are called to believe in him.

The challenge could not be more urgent or personal. We all tend to avoid death. We resist thinking about it. Yet there are times when we are forced to confront it. A loved one dies, or we are diagnosed with illness, or the news of a catastrophe shocks us. In such events, Jesus faces us again. "Do you believe?"

The second association is literary. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is a story of sin and salvation. There is a riveting moment when the murderer Raskolnikov demands that the young prostitute Sonia read him the story of Lazarus. "Read!" he roughly demands. In hearing her read, it becomes clear to him not only that she is a believer but that her faith is what keeps her from despair. The story of Lazarus, and the long pause that follows it (a break in the frenetic pace of the book), become a turning point.

The raising of Lazarus is a powerful story. To hear it, and to proclaim it in faith, is hard. But through it, light breaks.

I continue to pray for all of you through this challenging time and assure you that I remember all of your intentions at private Mass.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 29

Monday: Dn. 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62/
Jn. 8:1-11

Tuesday: Nm. 21:4-9/Jn. 8:21-20

Wednesday: Dn. 3:14-20, 91-92, 95/Jn. 8:31-42

Thursday: Gn. 17:3-9/Jn. 8:51-59

Friday: Jer. 20:10-13/Jn. 10:31-42

Saturday: Ez. 37:21-28/Jn. 11:45-56

Sunday: Mt. 21:1-11/Ls. 50:4-7/Phil. 2:6-11/Mt. 26:14-27, 66
or 27:11-54

YOU ARE EVER PRESENT, HEAVENLY FATHER.

YOU SEE ALL, HEAR ALL AND KNOW ALL.

LET YOUR PRESENCE GIVE US REASSURANCE
THAT THIS WORLD WILL SURVIVE,

REGARDLESS OF ALL THE THREATS
THAT SURROUND US.

AMEN

WORSHIP

**MASSES
ARE SUSPENDED
UNTIL
FURTHER
NOTICE**

PARISH EVENTS CALENDAR

**PARISH
EVENTS
HAVE BEEN
SUSPENDED
UNTIL
FURTHER
NOTICE**

THE FOLLOWING ARE EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

- All confirmations through May 17, 2020 will be rescheduled, once the situation stabilizes.
- Funeral Masses may continue to be celebrated, but with only the immediate family members and funeral home workers present.
- Baptisms may continue to be celebrated, but only with the sponsor(s) and immediate family members present. New water must be blessed for every individual baptism.
- Marriages may continue to be celebrated, but only with the bride, groom, two witnesses and immediate family members present.

Livestreamed and Internet Masses

As Previously reported, if you would like to view and participate in a Mass on your computer, tablet, or smart phone, please go to the Erie Diocesan Website (eriercd.org) and click on the link "Pray With Us In Real Time" provided on the home page. There is also a prayer for Spiritual Communion as well as some important news items on the page. Unfortunately, we do not have the ability to do this at St. Anthony of Padua but you can listen to another priest preside and preach for a change of pace.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Fr. Mark will be available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the Penitential Room at St. Anthony of Padua Church Monday, March 30 and Friday, April 3 from 2:00 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. You may also call the rectory from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday to make an appointment for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Church Visits

St. Anthony of Padua Church will be open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. and Sunday from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. for visits and private prayer. If someone else is in the church, please maintain a safe distance. Booklets for the Stations of the Cross and the Novena to St. Anthony of Padua will be at the Gathering Space Entrance. Please enter the church from the parking lot.

Please be aware that like any family, our parish has ongoing operating cost. We are entirely dependent upon you to meet those financial obligations. Please continue to make your weekly offertory gifts by mail to St. Anthony of Padua, P.O. Box 214, Cambridge Springs, PA 16403, or drop-off at the parish office, 165 Beach Ave, Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri from 9 am - 3 pm.

*"Holy Spirit, open my heart
to see and welcome Jesus this week.
Give me a humble heart and a willingness
to have my expectations stretched."*

CHURCH NAME: ST. ANTONY OF PADUA

CHURCH NO.:

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:
