

**Wednesday April 2 for the fifth Sunday in Lent**

**OPENING PRAYER: God of all creation, we gather together to share our lives in the context of your life-giving Word. You came that we might have life in abundance. Help us to reject sin and evil so that we might come to a fuller life in you. Open our graves to new life in your Son, Jesus. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

- In the words of Saint Benedict, “Listen with the ears of your heart.”
- Please note a word, phrase, or verse that seemed to really catch your notice.
- A volunteer slowly read aloud today’s passage. Afterwards, we have a few minutes of silent reflection.

**READING OF THE ASSIGNED GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN  
John 11:1-45**

The Raising of Lazarus.\*

1 Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany,<sup>a</sup> the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

2 Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill.

3 So the sisters sent word to him, saying, “Master, the one you love is ill.”

4 When Jesus heard this he said, “This illness is not to end in death,<sup>\*</sup> but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”<sup>b</sup>

5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

6 So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was.

7 Then after this he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

8 The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?”<sup>c</sup>

9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in a day? If one walks during the day,<sup>d</sup> he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.<sup>e</sup>

10 But if one walks at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”<sup>\*</sup>

11 He said this, and then told them, “Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him.”

12 So the disciples said to him, “Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved.”

13 But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep.<sup>f</sup>

14 So then Jesus said to them clearly, “Lazarus has died.

15 And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him.”

16 So Thomas, called Didymus,<sup>\*</sup> said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go to die with him.”<sup>g</sup>

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

18 Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles<sup>\*</sup> away.

19 And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother.<sup>h</sup>

20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home.

21 Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.<sup>i</sup>

22 [But] even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you.”

23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise.”

24 Martha said to him, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.”<sup>i</sup>

25 Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,<sup>k</sup>

26 and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

27<sup>\*</sup> <sup>l</sup> She said to him, “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.”

28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, “The teacher is here and is asking for you.”

29 As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him.

30 For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him.

31 So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

32 When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

33 When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed\* and deeply troubled,

34 and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Sir, come and see.”

35 And Jesus wept.<sup>m</sup>

36 So the Jews said, “See how he loved him.”

37 But some of them said, “Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?”

38 So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.

39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him, “Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days.”

40 Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?”

41 So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, “Father,\* I thank you for hearing me.

42 I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me.”<sup>n</sup>

43 And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice,\* “Lazarus, come out!”

44 The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, “Untie him and let him go.”

45 Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.<sup>o</sup>

Notes:

\* [11:1–44] The raising of Lazarus, the longest continuous narrative in John outside of the passion account, is the climax of the signs. It leads directly to the decision of the Sanhedrin to kill Jesus. The theme of life predominates. Lazarus is a token of the real life that Jesus dead and raised will give to all who believe in him. Johannine irony is found in the fact that Jesus' gift of life leads to his own death. The story is not found in the synoptics, but cf. Mk 5:21 and parallels; Lk 7:11–17. There are also parallels between this story and Luke's parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus (Lk 16:19–31). In both a man named Lazarus dies; in Luke, there is a request that he return to convince his contemporaries of the need for faith and repentance, while in John, Lazarus does return and some believe but others do not.

\* [11:4] Not to end in death: this is misunderstood by the disciples as referring to physical death, but it is meant as spiritual death.

\* [11:10] The light is not in him: the ancients apparently did not grasp clearly the entry of light through the eye; they seem to have thought of it as being in the eye; cf. Lk 11:34; Mt 6:23.

\* [11:16] Called Didymus: Didymus is the Greek word for twin. Thomas is derived from the Aramaic word for twin; in an ancient Syriac version and in the Gospel of Thomas (80:11–12) his given name, Judas, is supplied.

\* [11:18] About two miles: literally, “about fifteen stades”; a stade was 607 feet.

\* [11:27] The titles here are a summary of titles given to Jesus earlier in the gospel.

\* [11:33] Became perturbed: a startling phrase in Greek, literally, “He snorted in spirit,” perhaps in anger at the presence of evil (death).

\* [11:41] Father: in Aramaic, “*abba*”. See note on Mk 14:36.

\* [11:43] Cried out in a loud voice: a dramatization of Jn 5:28; “the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice.”

## QUESTIONS FOR SHARING

1. Name types of graves people can find themselves in today, e.g., grave of depression, grief and poverty. What can we do to lift ourselves out of a grave we may find ourselves in?
2. According to John's Gospel, our three big enemies are the world, the flesh and the devil. The 'flesh' is that tendency in us to live life without reference to God and his ways. What causes us to sometimes live in the flesh and to ignore God and his ways?
3. At the grave of Lazarus, Jesus says, “Unbind him and let him go free.” What can hold us bound (e.g., an addiction, resentment) so that we are prevented from living life as freely and as fully as God wishes for us? What can help us to get unbounded and go free?

## Commentary

In last week's Gospel, Jesus declares himself “Light of the World” and he proves it by giving physical and spiritual sight to a blind man. This week, Jesus declares himself to be “The Resurrection and the Life” and proves it by raising a dead man from the sleep of death. The raising of Lazarus prefigures Jesus' own hour of Death and Resurrection. The great paradox of the story is that as Jesus gives life to Lazarus, the authorities begin to plan his death (vv 49-53). Jesus is condemned to death for being a life-giver. How strange and evil! We also notice again the struggle between light and darkness, belief and unbelief. Many come to believe in Jesus, but others recede into the darkness of unbelief. This particular story gives us a beautiful blending of both the divinity and humanity of Jesus. We witness the human side of Jesus in his reaction to the death of his friend. As he ‘weeps’ and is ‘troubled in spirit’ the bystanders observe: “See how much he loved Lazarus.” We see the divinity of Jesus at work when he raises Lazarus from the tomb. The heart and center of this story is found in verses 25-26,



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