

For The Bulletin Of  
March 29, 2020



***From Father Robert***

Today's liturgy continues the set of three Johannine readings during the Lenten season with the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead. We are reminded that two weeks ago we heard about the woman at the well. Last week Jesus made the man born blind to see. And today we have a sign of Jesus' identity par excellence: the raising from the dead. In the Gospel of John, Jesus performs signs rather than miracles, and there are precisely seven. The signs point to his true identity as the incarnate Word of God, Light of the Word, and the Author of Life. And the seventh and final sign, the raising of Lazarus is a fitting note on which to conclude the public ministry of Jesus. After this, the gospel story moves quickly to Holy week and the events surrounding the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and Exaltation.

Today's gospel story is filled with misunderstanding, and one nearly has the sense that Jesus is getting frustrated with the disciples. But the misunderstanding is a narrative device that the evangelist uses to illustrate how Jesus' thoughts and ways of knowing are so much more than the disciples'. For example, even though Jesus

was talking about Lazarus's death, the disciples took him literally in thinking that Lazarus was only asleep. Jesus tells them plainly that "Lazarus has died." He expresses gratitude that he was not there so that the disciples can believe (when he raises Lazarus from the dead). But even this is misunderstood by Thomas, who believes they are going to die with Jesus.

The misunderstanding continues with Martha's gentle scolding of Jesus when she claims that had Jesus been present, Lazarus would not have died. We recall that Jesus waited for two days after hearing the news of Lazarus being sick before he even went to see him! Jesus does not take the bait. He instead proclaims himself the resurrection and the life. Martha, in another case of misunderstanding, says she knows that Lazarus will rise on the last day. (She does not understand that Jesus will raise him shortly.)

Even the crowd does not understand the identity of Jesus, for they wonder why the one who made the blind to see could not have prevented the death of Lazarus. It seems everyone is wholly unprepared for what Jesus has in mind, a resurrection from the dead, even though he proclaimed himself to be the resurrection and the life. Jesus' prayer to the Father is fundamentally one of thanksgiving and gratitude for the opportunity for those gathered to believe that Jesus is sent by God the Father.

With a command to come forth, Jesus speaks, and Lazarus rises from the dead. The author of life has power over death. And now many believe in him.



### *Living The Paschal Mystery*

Such fundamental expressions of life and death are at the heart of today's gospel. Jesus deliberately was not present with Martha, Mary, and their brother Lazarus. It seems Jesus wanted to be sure Lazarus was understood to be dead, not merely sleeping or sick, so that Jesus could raise him from the dead. As a result, many began to believe in him – that he had been sent by the Father.

What do we believe about Jesus? Do we believe he is the author of life with power over death? Are there any people like Lazarus in our own lives who need to be raised to new life? Lazarus was a prefiguring of the resurrection. And yet, even Lazarus died again. Jesus' own resurrection is not a mere resuscitation, but a raising to new life, qualitatively different, never subject to death again. When we live with the promise of renewed life for eternity, we are living the promise of the paschal mystery.

Here are some questions to help you further reflect on today's scripture passages:

In the first reading from Ezekiel, God tells the people, "I will open your graves and have you rise from them." What are the areas in your own life in need of God's life-giving touch?

Through Ezekiel God proclaims, "I have promised and I will do it." What promises of God do you hold fast to in your life?

In the gospel we read our shortest Bible verse in English, "And Jesus wept." Why was it important for the gospel writer to include this detail? Does it affect your relationship with Jesus knowing he experienced human emotions?

Jesus reveals to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life." How do you interpret these words?



The Chrism Mass will still be celebrated in the Cathedral as scheduled on April 2, 2020 at 7 pm. However, in light of the shelter-in-place order in effect for the Bay Area, the Chrism Mass will NOT be open to the public and only a limited number of clergy will participate. The public may participate in the Chrism Mass via livestream through the Cathedral of Christ the Light's Facebook page [facebook.com/ctlcathedral.org](https://www.facebook.com/ctlcathedral.org).





Because of the shelter-in-place, we are unable to gather as a parish family to celebrate our holiest of days, Holy Week, The Sacred Paschal Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, The Great Vigil of Easter), and Easter. We will live stream the principle liturgies on the appropriate day:

Our Palm Sunday Liturgy will be live streamed on Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 a.m. as usual.

Our Holy Thursday Liturgy will be live streamed on Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 p.m.

Our Good Friday Liturgy will be live streamed on Friday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday will be live streamed on Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 a.m.

I continue to be grateful for the miracle of the Internet and our ability to make liturgy possible on our Facebook page. What a gift this has been, made possible by Lisa Lombardo, who has faithfully been live streaming for us for some time now. Thank you to all those who are with us and who are participating at home. May we all be grateful for the privilege of being gathered together in fellowship and bound in prayerful communion with one another.

#### ***PRAYER FOR A PANDEMIC***

May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no margin at all.

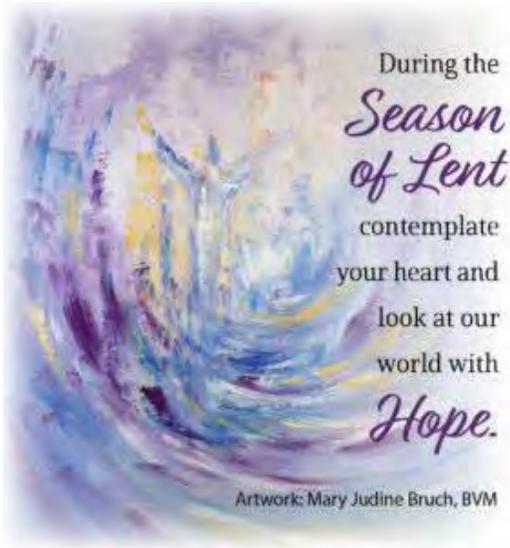
May we who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to one another and our neighbors. We ask this through Christ, our Great Physician and Healer.

Amen.

# Live Lent with Love



## ***Yielding to God This Lent***

*A Message of Hope*

BY: PATRICIA MITCHELL, CONTENT EDITOR, THE WORD AMONG US



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Have you ever heard of the phrase, “If you want to make God laugh, tell him your

plans”? That saying came to mind one morning as I thought about what I had planned for Lent this year. Among other things, I wanted to try to get to daily Mass more often. Now, because of the coronavirus pandemic, public Masses are cancelled in most places, including my own diocese.

So often we have our own ideas of what we should do for God. But our ways are not his ways (Isaiah 55:8). This Lent the Lord is asking me to let go of my own plans and surrender to his. That means staying at home, staying calm, and reaching out to people in love, even if it’s only by phone, text, or email.

This is a Lent I will never forget—and I suspect neither will you! Rarely are we freed up from so many daily commitments. Maybe we’ll have more time to sit with the Lord in prayer or to study Scripture. We may have time to enjoy our families more, to pray together, and to intercede for others. We can find creative ways to love our neighbors.

Above all, it’s a time to grow in trust. Remember that Lent is preparing us to celebrate the most momentous event in all of history: Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. We worship the risen Christ, the One who has already conquered sin and death. In him lies our hope. And even though many of us can’t receive Jesus in the Eucharist during this time, we know that he has not abandoned us. He is with us—always—and we can trust that he will bring good even out of this difficult situation (Matthew 28:20; Romans 8:28).



### ***Return to Me with All Your Heart***

An Examination of Conscience for Lent



Centuries ago, the prophet Joel called the people of Israel to return to the Lord through the gift of repentance. “Rend your hearts, not your garments,” he pleaded (Joel 2:13).

And when they did, God forgave them, welcomed them back into his presence, and opened the floodgates of his love and protection for them.

God wants to open the floodgates for us this Lent as well. And so he asks us to return to him with all our hearts. He asks us to examine our hearts and bring to Confession anything we find there that keeps us separated from him. He promises that as we do, our guilt will fall away. Even better, we’ll find the peace and confidence that come when we encounter the mercy of God.

How can we prepare for this encounter? There are countless areas we can examine. But in the end, it comes down to the two greatest commandments: to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Below are a few questions that can help you as you examine your conscience. Remember: these are just a few areas to consider. So begin here, but ask the Spirit to help you identify any other areas you may need to bring before the Lord.

#### **Love the Lord with All Your Heart.**

- Am I setting aside a regular time to be with the Lord in prayer and participating in Sunday Eucharist?
- Are there ways I am placing selfish concerns above my need to follow Jesus and do his will?
- Are there any ways I fail to see and love Christ in my neighbors—especially in the lonely, the poor, and the needy?
- Have I offended the Lord by using coarse, disrespectful language—directed toward God or other people?

#### **Love Your Neighbor as Yourself.**

- Am I being generous in spending time with the people around me? Or have I been isolating myself, immersing myself in work or electronic devices instead of human interaction?
- Have I been harboring a grudge or resentment against someone instead of trying to forgive that person?
- Have I engaged in lying, gossip, or slander against another person?
- Have I been pure and chaste in my relationships?
- Is there anyone I have hurt whose forgiveness I need to seek?

Return to the Lord. Confess your sins. His heart is open to you. His arms are open to you. Let him embrace you and fill you with his mercy.

*For those who wish to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone: 925-451-9435.*



**Total Silence. Total Stillness. Total Peace**

I can understand that the question or wish for peace is on a great many peoples' minds considering the outbreaks and the decisions of the government. Perhaps I can offer my definition of peace as well as a possible setting for it. And remember, this is only what calms me. Your definition may be the complete opposite, dear reader. To me, I see peace as not total order or total balance, but total stillness or emptiness.

Everything being in order can still be busy, and everything in balance will certainly mean there is trouble nearby. But with utter stillness, like in the fading hours of the day on a lake or in a forest, you can experience a silence so profound and complete that it's enough to make one shudder. As with emptiness, with nothing to cause noise, there is no noise at all. Peace, at least to me, isn't truly or fully the lack of conflict or presence of cooperation.

It is what I spoke of before. Total silence. Total stillness. Total peace.

The scene that brings peace to me the most is that of a cabin up in some of the highest reaches of Minnesota. It is a place of nearly untouched beauty and verdant life. Down some distance from the cabin, beyond the pine, over the rocks, through the brush and branches, and at the edging waters of a lake, sat upon pine needles and birch bark, there is a weathered and wooden bench. It's as gray as steel and an elder to me. Moss grows on the legs while lichen sprouts on the seat and arms. Around me is a small clearing, big enough just to feel the freedom of space, but not so far as to feel separate from the forest. Pines stand vigilant at the edges of the water, rooted in soil and stone alike while birches watch behind the bench with noiseless elegance with their pine counterparts. And from the bench's rough or smooth seat, weathered and worn nonetheless, I see through a gap in the trees the lake set aflame by a dying sun. The waves of quicksilver, barely more than ripples in a pond, are turned to gold at their peaks and obsidian at their valleys. And in the sky above, ablaze in the magnificence and splendor of heaven's gates, clouds stretch across to grasp the sun's rays and allow the coming night to shade the azure sky with violet and lavender only for the sun to streak its own brush past the clouds to paint its rays atop Night's work to produce a masterpiece no mortal or deity alike could replicate.

From there, on my humble wooden bench, I sit and look on, the whispers of wind and water falling on deaf ears

as I take in the seraphic scene. From the sight of it all, the shackles of the tumultuous world fall away to allow me peace. It would not matter if it had only been a moment or a lifetime. That sight, and the memory of such a soulful world give me enough peace for eternity. Enough so that I would never be without its mark and blessing.

- Jack Plurkowski

*The reflection was written by Jack Plurkowski, a high school senior and the grandson of Bob and Marla Plurkowski. Thank you, Jack, for such a beautiful and powerful reflection to help us at this present time when we are in need of such reflections and sharings of the heart.*



***From Werner Hoch***

FRIDAY THE 20<sup>th</sup> WAS THE VERY FIRST FOOD BANK OF CONTRA COSTA 'S FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GIVEAWAY AT ST . IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH CHURCH ... AND WHAT A GREAT SUCCESS IT WAS!

17 NEEDY FAMILIES CAME AND RECEIVED 2 BAGS FULL OF GOODIES!

THE WEATHER WAS PERFECT. THE TRUCK ARRIVED EARLY WHICH GAVE US PLENTY OF TIME TO SET UP 4 TABLES, SPACED APART 6 TO 8 FEET.

WE GAVE OUT 7 DIFFERENT ITEMS. I WOULD CALL THIS A REAL SUCCESS.

OF COURSE, IN THE FUTURE WE ANTICIPATE MANY MORE FAMILIES TO COME FOR THE GREAT FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GIVEAWAY.

THE FOOD TRUCK IS COMING TO ST . IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH EVERY 1<sup>st</sup> AND 3<sup>rd</sup> FRIDAY OF THE MONTH FROM 3:30 UNTIL 4:30.

**'What did you learn from the coronavirus pandemic?'**

Mar 23, 2020

by Nancy Sylvester



"A Carthusian Saint Visiting the Plague Stricken," drawing by Andrea Sacchi, ca. 1599–1661, Rome (Metropolitan Museum of Art)

"Where were you when the coronavirus hit?" A question we often ask ourselves as we recall a major incident (often tragic) that has occurred in our life. Perhaps when we recall the coronavirus the better question will be: "What did you learn from the coronavirus pandemic?"

As I write this, we are in the middle of trying to figure out how it spread and what we have to do to control the infection. Members of the medical profession are working around the clock to figure this out and to attend to everyone who has been infected with this disease.

The rest of us are being asked to stay inside and practice "social distancing" for an unknown period of time.

It is hard to gain a perspective when you are in the middle of such uncertainty; to make sense of what is

going on and how the future will emerge.

Following my contemplative sitting I found myself drawn to the Psalms. The Psalms capture so many emotions, offer poetic ways to interpret what we are experiencing, and help us see the divine presence in it all. As I reflected on all that is going on and how to enter it from a contemplative space, I found [Psalm 18](#) very helpful, and so offer a few reflections on facing this crisis. I will be quoting from Nan Merrill's translation, *Psalms for Praying*:

You delivered me from prejudice and intolerance;  
You opened my heart to all nations;  
People whom I had not known befriended me.

I was on a pilgrimage in Greece with FutureChurch when the concern about the coronavirus got escalated for President Donald Trump. Before our departure many countries were beginning to take measures to contain the virus, but President Trump did not yet believe that this virus was a major national threat. So we were able to go on the trip and return home safely prior to U.S. policy restricting travel.

The coronavirus became "real" to me toward the end of the pilgrimage. Our group of 29 had gone from being strangers to a real community. We were careful and sanitized our hands all the time. We felt safe and tried to keep things in perspective. As we travelled from Thessaloniki to Athens, we were often the only ones at the

hotels we stayed in at the restaurants and at the various archeological sites.

When we arrived at the hotel in Athens and went to dinner, things changed. When I entered a very full restaurant, I was caught off guard. All of a sudden looking at these "others" from various countries, I realized the implications of what had now been called a pandemic. For a moment I felt all these "others" were the potential carriers of the virus. Certainly not our group of 29.

I became aware of how very quickly a group can become a tribe and the "others" become those from whom you need to protect yourself and your group. The "others" might even become the cause of whatever bad is happening and become the scapegoat.

However, as I began to reflect on the reality of such a virus and trying to contain it, it became clear that no matter what my group and I might be doing to stay healthy, it wasn't enough. I had to trust that everyone else in the restaurant was also committed to washing their hands and the other preventive measures we were asked to practice. For if anyone of us were to have the virus, we would all be quarantined.

I could feel the web that was woven around everyone in the dining room. We were all interconnected and on this journey together. The feeling was quite visceral and continues in me while I complete my self-imposed quarantine back home.

It is too easy to fall into unconscious patterns of blaming the "other" — the

"Kung Flu" virus, the "Chinese" virus — it is their fault. Contemplation invites you into a spaciousness to stay awake and alert to reactions that are intolerant or prejudicial. It invites you to be open to the unexpected stranger who offers you compassion.

For I pursued my fears and faced them;  
And did not run back until I was free.  
I saw each one through, so that they were not able to rise;  
They were transformed by love.

Fears abound. Such uncertainty. How long will it last? Will I be able to pay my bills? What if I get sick? How long will I be separated from the people I love, especially the elders? Will there be enough food and other essentials? Will I have a job? Will I have my business? What about my future income or my savings? What will the future be for my children and grandchildren?

Other emotions: resentment, anger, deep sadness, frustration rise up as we face weddings that are — after months in planning — being disrupted; diplomas for graduating college and high school seniors awarded through the mail; trips saved for over the years canceled; birthdays, anniversaries, sporting events, concerts, plays, conferences and meetings — so many events that enrich our lives ... not happening.

The Psalmist says for us to pursue our fears and face them. Great advice as we know that negative emotions cause stress and illness if they are not acknowledged. As counterintuitive as it seems, to face into those emotions

and fears, actually embrace them, helps release their power over you and their negative effect on you.

It is useless to try to stop feeling such emotions or to feel you shouldn't have them for all sorts of reasons. Repressing or rejecting them often keeps them simmering just below the surface. Contemplative practices in both the East and the West invite us to intentionally lean into the feeling, even intensify it and transform it with a loving heart. [Tonglen](#) from the Buddhist tradition and the [welcoming practice](#), which is part of centering prayer, are worth trying to see if they might help at this time. The links take you to past reflections that explain these practices.

Yet there was no safe haven, no hiding place from fear.  
Then the channels of the sea were seen,  
And the foundations of the world laid bare,  
The earth gave a mighty shudder  
Then settled down to heal in the Silence.

It seems as if our earth is giving a mighty shudder. We know that our economic and political systems have become dysfunctional. As a people, too many of us in industrialized countries consume far more than is necessary. Individualism has dwarfed concern for the common good. The climate crisis continues to intensify. The old ways do not work anymore. We need a new consciousness to imagine new ways of responding to the crises we are experiencing.

As the Earth settles down to heal in "the Silence," perhaps we can come together across the ideological divide to sit together in silence. In that space we would begin to share our deepest longings and hopes for how to be an Earth community for this millennium. Having stopped doing so much of what we take for granted, we may be willing to emerge from our healing in new ways — creating structures to provide a more equitable distribution of revenue and resources for all.

I abandon myself to You, O Living Presence,  
My strength. You are my rock, my stronghold,  
My freedom. ...  
I call upon You, Heart of my heart,  
Singing praises to your Name,  
And fear no longer holds me.

Contemplation is setting the intention to be open to the workings of the divine within oneself. During this time of crisis let us enter into contemplative sitting. Let us pray that we learn through this pandemic the stark realization that we are all connected; that when we face into our fears, we can transform them through love; and that we emerge from it all committed to a new way of being and acting.

In the years to come, that is what I hope to respond when asked: "What did you learn from the coronavirus pandemic?"

[Nancy Sylvester is founder and director of the Institute for Communal Contemplation and Dialogue. She served in leadership of her own religious community, [the Sister](#)

Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Monroe, Michigan, as well as in the presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. Prior to that she was national coordinator of Network, the national Catholic social justice lobby.]



The parish website: [www.stignatiusofantioch.org](http://www.stignatiusofantioch.org) has been updated with 2 important features:

1. FLOCKNOTE: The parish setting up an additional avenue to rapidly communicate important information to our parishioners. Flocknote is already being used by a number of parishes within the Oakland Diocese.

Signup is totally voluntary and easy. Just follow the simple instructions below:

- Go to the parish website: [www.stignatiusofantioch.org](http://www.stignatiusofantioch.org)
- Click on “FLOCKNOTE SIGNUP” under Quick Links in the right margin.
- You will automatically be redirected to the parish’s signup page at Flocknote.
- Enter your name, email address and **mobile** phone number (entering your mobile phone is optional) and click the Sign Me Up button.

- You will receive an email from Flocknote to verify your email address. Just click on the **Verify my email button** and you’re done!

If you have any questions, email the parish at [st.ignatius@sbcglobal.net](mailto:st.ignatius@sbcglobal.net). Please enter “Flocknote Signup” in the subject line.

2. There is another new link on the right side of the home page: “Financial Support Options”. Clicking on this link will bring you to a page that offers options for continuing your financial support during the shelter-in-place directive. It includes an option for online giving through the PayPal platform.

**If you prefer to use the U.S. mail, please address your offerings to the rectory:**

**St. Ignatius of Antioch  
209 Tanganyika Ct.  
Antioch, CA. 94509**

In closing, please know that I and the Pastoral Staff are thinking of and praying for our St. Ignatius of Antioch Community.

### **Prayer for Our Community:**

*O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are*

*speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, AMEN.*



I received in the mail a wonderful announcement concerning our adopted parochial school of St. Peter Martyr in Pittsburg. They recently went through an evaluation by the WCEA/WASC Visiting Committee and their observations included the following commendations:

St. Peter Martyr School is a highly functioning school with the following strengths:

- Strong community rooted in tradition and faith.
- Dedicated and collaborative administration, faculty, and staff.
- Joyful students who love their school community.
- Commitment and involvement of parents and alumni.
- Commitment to community service and outreach.
- Initial implementation of blended learning model.
- The Principal is a strong spiritual leader and role model.

- Welcoming and loving environment.
- Integration of technology and adaptive learning program.
- Responsible use of resources both in finances and facilities.

Congratulations on such an outstanding evaluation! We are very proud of you and pray that you continue to be the outstanding parochial school that you are.

Praying in Crisis

Wednesday, March 25, 2020

*The Center for Action and Contemplation faculty member Brian McLaren is an author and contemplative activist. He spent over twenty years as the pastor of a church where he lived, worked, and prayed with people in good times and bad. Responding to crises is not theoretical for him, but a deeply felt and lived experience which comes through so clearly in these words. I hope you will feel encouraged to take this practice to your own time of prayer in the days, weeks, and months ahead.*

When we call out for help, we are bound more powerfully to God through our needs and weakness, our unfulfilled hopes and dreams, and our anxieties and problems

than we ever could have been through our joys, successes, and strengths alone. . . . [1]

Anxieties can gray the whole sky like cloud cover or descend on our whole horizon like fog. When we rename our anxieties, in a sense we distill them into requests. What covered the whole sky can now be contained in a couple of buckets.

**So when we're suffering from** anxiety, we can begin by simply holding the word *help* before God, letting that one word bring focus to the chaos of our racing thoughts. Once we feel that our mind has dropped out of the frantic zone and into a spirit of connection with God, we can let the general word *help* go and in its place hold more specific words that name what we need, thereby condensing the cloud of vague anxiety into a bucket of substantial request. So we might hold the word *guidance* before God.

Or *patience*. Or *courage*.  
Or *resilience*. Or *boundaries*,  
*mercy*, *compassion*,  
*determination*, *healing*, *calm*,  
*freedom*, *wisdom*, or *peace*. . . .

[2]

Along with our anxieties and hurts, we also bring our disappointments to God. If anxieties focus on what *might happen*, and hurts focus on what *has happened*, disappointments focus on what *has not happened*. Again, as the saying goes, revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing, so simply acknowledging or naming our disappointment to God is an important move. This is especially important because many **of us, if we don't bring our** disappointment to God, will blame our disappointment on God, thus alienating ourselves from our best hope of comfort and strength. . . .

**Whether we're dealing with** anxieties, wounds, disappointments, or other needs or struggles, there is enormous power in simple, strong words—the words by which we name our pain and then translate it into a request to God. *Help* is the door into this vital practice of petition, through which we expand beyond our own capacities and resources **to God's**. . . .

Through this practice of expansion and petition, we discover

something priceless: the sacred connection can grow stronger through, not in spite of, our anxieties, wounds, disappointments, struggles, and needs. The Compassionate One is **our gracious friend, and we don't** have to earn anything, deserve anything, achieve anything, or merit anything to bring our needs to God. We can just come as we are. [3]

*in all the holy names of God,  
Amen.*

***The Center for Action and Contemplation is directed by Father Richard Rohr, OFM, and is one of the foremost centers for spiritual renewal in the United States. Fr. Rohr is a renowned author, speaker, and spiritual director.***

### Gateway to Action & Contemplation:

*What word or phrase resonates with or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine to do?*

### Prayer for Our Community:

*O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares **each other's burdens and the weight of glory**. Listen to our **hearts' longings for the healing of our world**. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers*

## *Justice Corner*

By Carolyn Krantz, Pastoral Associate

This time of the pandemic is being compared to World War II. Everyone is affected. People have to make sacrifices. Food is scarce. Grocery shelves are bare. Our normal routine is disrupted. Every family is aware of the death of loved ones. That is why the sentence in the Gospel struck me, “This illness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God.” Yes, people are sick and dying, but people are also showing their resilience: singing from their balconies together, talking to the elderly through the windows of their nursing homes, and healthcare workers are spending themselves tirelessly to serve the sick, etc. We can rejoice in the goodness of ordinary people who show us how to give glory to God. Our interconnectedness now as humans facing this tragedy stands out in stark reality to the time before when we saw only our differences. Our disagreements fade before the reality of end-of-life issues.

For Christians, death is a part of life. If we walk with Jesus we will not stumble. We face death, referred to in the Gospel as “going back to Judea (Jerusalem),” with courage and with one ear always attuned to the will of the Father and to that spring of water that wells up within us. We walk in the day and in the night unafraid. In Him “Darkness and light are the same.” It is significant that this pandemic is occurring in the Lent/Easter season when the scriptures hold before us the meaning of life lived with Jesus.

In the Gospel, the disciples did not understand so Jesus used the experience of the sickness and death of Lazarus to teach them about the kingdom of God. “I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe.” We, too, must use this time as a teachable moment. What is God asking of us?

Then there is the whole conversation with Martha and Mary. “If you had been here my brother would not have died...but I know he will rise on the last day.” And Jesus' response, “I am the Resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live.” What appropriate instruction for this time! No one likes facing death. Fear and confusion fill the soul. But Jesus gives us the way through. “Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” We will live with Him in the Father's house. Agony fills the garden of our souls and sacrifice is the required action for these days, but we know the way through. Jesus is teaching us that through death, there is life.

It is noteworthy that none of this was easy for Jesus. “He was perturbed and deeply troubled...So Jesus perturbed again came to the tomb.” We, too, are deeply troubled by the thousands of deaths caused by this pandemic. Facing the tomb is not easy. We suffer with those who have lost a loved one and those who weep for their relatives that are sick and in pain. But Jesus promises, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” We wait, asking in prayer for the meaning of this experience.

The last Gospel instruction is significant. Lazarus comes out bound hand and foot with burial bands. We, too, will be constrained by suffering and death before this pandemic is through. Jesus says to them and to us, “Untie him and let him go.” Untie the bonds of fear and loss. Let go of panic and hopelessness. He is the resurrection and the life. May He purify our minds and hearts so that we may understand His teaching and accept His instruction. Whether we must bear sickness or go through death with this experience, our hearts must be united with Him. May we too, “begin to believe.”

## *Parish Perspective—*

By Peter Degl'Innocenti, Pastoral Associate

### *Lent and War*

Continuing our Lenten trilogy of the scrutinies we now come to the raising of Lazarus. The raising of Lazarus may have been a deciding factor in Pilate caving-in to the desires of the Sanhedrin to have Jesus crucified. Here's one theory as to why.

Until recently, all wars have been wars of attrition. When one side eliminates enough of the enemy the enemy surrenders and the war is over. The last man standing, i.e. warriors, win. Now scripture tells us that a contingent from the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem was with Mary and Martha to “comfort” them at the loss of their brother Lazarus. They were undoubtedly there to gain information about Jesus’ whereabouts and intended actions. When Martha hears of Jesus’ approach and goes out to meet him, you can bet your bottom dollar that at least two of the “comforters” went with her. They also witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This is a really **BIG** deal from a military or force-of-arms point of view. If the Sanhedrin’s Temple Guards or Pilate’s Roman Army engaged in action against Jesus’ followers and were killed; neither the Sanhedrin nor Pilate could raise their troops from the dead. But! If any of Jesus’ followers fell in death; Jesus could raise them back to life to fight again. It doesn’t take a military genius or mathematician to figure-out who would win this war of attrition. Their only logical solution is to eliminate the one who can do the raising, Jesus. This “bug of fear” placed in the ear of Pilate by the Sanhedrin could have been the deciding factor to have Jesus crucified after Pilate tried everything in his power to be a fair judge of the charges brought against Jesus at his trial.

Of course, there would not, nor could there be, war fomented by true followers of Jesus. Jesus would not allow it. Neither Pilate or the Sanhedrin had anything to fear, but the fear grew in their minds and hearts to the point of distraction. Fear, hate, and misguided notions of what the will of God is had blinded them to the gift of life they could have risen to in Christ Jesus.

We are called to new resurrected life in Christ Jesus. The disciplines of Lent are designed to cast-out our fears, fill our hearts with love for everyone, even our enemies, and to seek the eternal life Jesus offers to all people. Truly, St. Paul stated it correctly when he said, “We fight against powers and principalities.” We fight against principalities and kingdoms of evil. We fight against dark spirits and ignorance, not against people. People are not our enemies, but fear, hate, envy, and an unforgiving heart are. We defeat them with God’s love given through Jesus Christ.

# FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT



## Unbind Us

Father of life, Lord of the living,  
just as your Son called Lazarus forth from  
the tomb,

so he commands us to step away from all  
that binds us.

Revive our sense of evil  
so that we will confess the ways  
we are wrapped up in sin.

Liberate us from ignorance and apathy,  
and enliven our desire for justice, healing,  
and peace.

Send us forth to proclaim your saving power  
to all who are entombed.

Free us from the death-dealing power of sin  
so that we may bear witness to your Spirit  
dwelling within us.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Sunday, March 29, 2020**

**From the Grave**

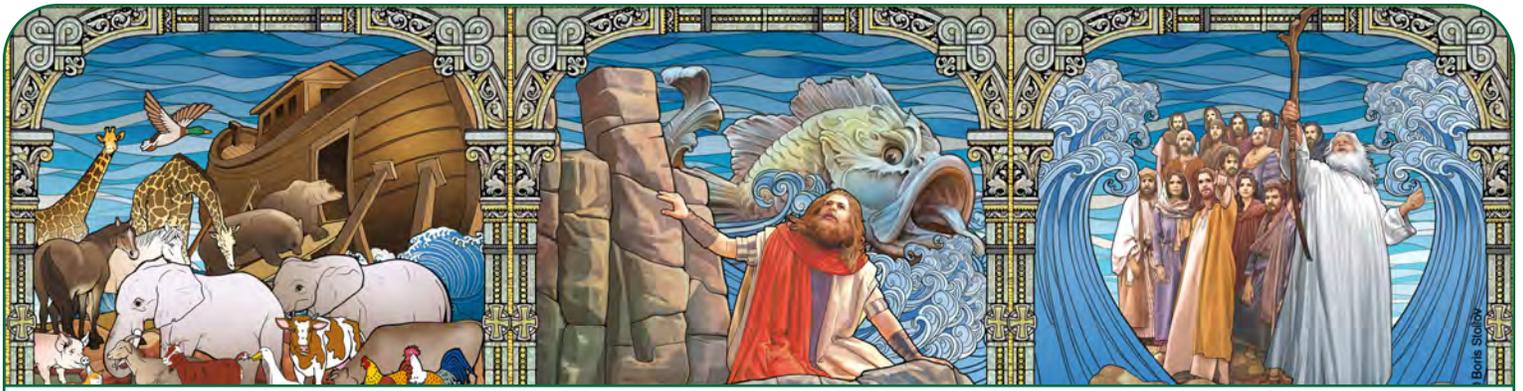


*Today's Readings: Ezekiel 37:12–14; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8; Romans 8:8–11; John 11:1–45.* At the time of Ezekiel, God's people did not believe in an afterlife. Ezekiel's prophecy would have given some people hope in a future beyond the grave, but others would have struggled to believe. At the time of Jesus, even those who had come to believe in the resurrection of the dead thought God would raise the just all at once and as part of completing his reign.

By raising Lazarus, Jesus reveals God's life-saving presence had already become active in a new, though unexpected way. The spirit of God that sustains all creation, that gave life to the first human being and filled prophets like Ezekiel, flowed outward from Jesus to free people from sin

and death. All who embrace Jesus as the resurrection and the life encounter God's life-saving and life-changing Spirit.

The gift of God's Spirit, however, is not only a promise that God will one day open our graves and breathe life into us again. Our new lives in the Spirit begin now. We participate in the life-giving power of God whenever we work to free those who are trapped, bound, entombed: victims of domestic violence, refugees, the chronically ill, the homebound, the unborn. By standing with them, by standing for life, we reveal the continuing action of the Spirit. God opens graves and raises people to new life, not only in the future but today.



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, March 30 In Our Hands

In the reading from Daniel, Susanna's life is at risk when all are tricked into turning against her. An injustice is almost committed. The woman in the Gospel passage who is caught by the religious elders seems guilty, but we sense another injustice: the woman seems more like a pawn to be used against Jesus than someone deserving of deadly punishment. Both passages warn us against making hasty judgments. The next time you disagree with someone, ask questions that help you understand that person's point of view. *Today's Readings: Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62; Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6; John 8:1-11.*

### Tuesday, March 31 From Above

God does not merely oppose sin and death, he subverts it. When the Israelites repent of their ingratitude, God turns the object of their punishment into an instrument of healing. Centuries later, Jesus turns the cross, an instrument of death and a symbol of Roman power, into the means of salvation and freedom. Most of all, by dying, Jesus turns death into life. Spend some time today reverencing a crucifix. *Today's Readings: Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 102:2-3, 16-18, 19-21; John 8:21-30.*

### Wednesday, April 1 The Living Truth

When the king orders the three men thrown into the furnace, the men enter the fire knowing that their allegiance is to the God of Israel and no one else. By embracing that truth, the men are saved from a fiery death. Because Jesus is the Son of God, those who believe in him, who embrace who he is, will be saved from death forever. Pray with Daniel 3:52-90 or write your own hymn of praise. *Today's Readings: Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; John 8:31-42.*

### Thursday, April 2 Unlikely as It Sounds

God's extraordinary promises to Abraham seemed laughable. When Sarah gave birth to Isaac, however, Abraham and Sarah would have laughed for joy. In the Gospel reading, the response is far more serious when Jesus speaks of what God will do. In both cases, people struggle to believe God's word. What God says frequently astounds and challenges us. How has God astounded or challenged you this Lenten season? *Today's Readings: Genesis 17:3-9; Psalm 105:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; John 8:51-59.*

### Friday, April 3 Blasphemous Works

Although we think of Jesus as an innocent victim, his opponents followed the law when charging him with blasphemy: Jesus claimed a relationship with God that surpassed all others. In response to his opponents, Jesus asks that they examine his ministry to see if his works conform to the will of God. Jeremiah, likewise, expressed his confidence that he had faithfully answered God's call. What do your works say about you? *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7; John 10:31-42.*

### Saturday, April 4 Dwelling

In Ezekiel's prophecy, God declares that he will gather all his people displaced by war, ensure their security, and dwell with them forever. In Jesus, however, God comes to his people before they and the land are ready. The people are divided and a foreign nation occupies their land. God often comes to us when we are unprepared, but perhaps that is the very reason God arrives. Without God's guidance, we would never be ready for God to dwell with us. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, confess the ways you are unprepared for God. *Today's Readings: Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31:10, 11-12abcd, 13; John 11:45-56.*

