

## Fifth Sunday of Lent: Alternate Readings, Year A

### First Reading Ez 37:12-14

*I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live.*

The Lord says this: I am now going to open your graves; I mean to raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live, and I shall resettlement you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this – it is the Lord who speaks.

### Responsorial Psalm

Ps 129. R. v.7

*(R.) With the Lord there is mercy  
and fullness of redemption*

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,  
Lord, hear my voice!  
O let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my pleading. (R.)
2. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,  
Lord, who would survive?  
But with you is found forgiveness:  
for this we revere you. (R.)
3. My soul is waiting for the Lord,  
I count on his word.  
My soul is longing for the Lord  
more than watchman for daybreak.  
(Let the watchman count on daybreak  
and Israel on the Lord.) (R.)
4. Because with the Lord there is mercy  
and fullness of redemption,  
Israel indeed he will redeem  
from all its iniquity. (R.)

### Second Reading Rom 8:8-11

*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he will give life to your own mortal bodies.*

People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. Your interests, however, are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact, unless you possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to him. Though your body may be dead it is because of sin, but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

### Gospel Acclamation See Jn 11:25, 26

*Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!  
I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord;  
whoever believes in me will not die for ever.*

### Gospel Jn 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33-45 or longer form Jn 11:1-45

*I am the resurrection and the life.*

The sisters Martha and Mary sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill.' On receiving the message, Jesus said, 'This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.'

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea.'

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said:

*'I am the resurrection and the life.*

*If anyone believes in me, even though he dies  
he will live,*

*and whoever lives and believes in me  
will never die.*

*Do you believe this?'*

'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.' Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

*'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.*

*I knew indeed that you always hear me,  
but I speak*

*for the sake of all these who stand round me,  
so that they may believe it was you who sent  
me.'*

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.



### Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

This Gospel tells us that Our Lord was moved with compassion in an almost violent way, raging against the seeming finality of death. The raising of Lazarus was a demonstration of his power to rob death of its supposed supremacy.

But, Our Lord did not set Lazarus completely free! You may think that to be raised from the dead was not a bad start, but Lazarus was still shuffling: bound, constrained, constricted by the past. To those gathered around the tomb Jesus issued the command: 'Set him free, unbind him.' It was the collective effort of others which enabled Lazarus to walk as a liberated son of God.

You may find yourself commanded by the Lord to help unbind a person who has had a deadening experience which has drained them of life. We get the courage to respond because it is the command of the One who definitively conquered death.

We could pause for a moment to resolve to help liberate others already helped by the grace of Him whom we believe to be the *Resurrection and the Life*.

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## Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year C

### First Reading Is 43:16-21

*I am doing a new thing and I will give drink to my people.*

Thus says the Lord,  
who made a way through the sea,  
a path in the great waters;  
who put chariots and horse in the field  
and a powerful army,  
which lay there never to rise again,  
snuffed out, put out like a wick:

No need to recall the past,  
no need to think about what was done  
before.

See, I am doing a new deed,  
even now it comes to light; can you not  
see it?

Yes, I am making a road in the  
wilderness,  
paths in the wilds.

The wild beasts will honour me,  
jackals and ostriches,  
because I am putting water in the  
wilderness

(rivers in the wild)  
to give my chosen people drink.  
The people I have formed for myself  
will sing my praises.

### Responsorial Psalm

**Ps 125. R. v.3**

*(R.) The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are filled with joy.*

1. When the Lord delivered Zion from bondage,  
it seemed like a dream.  
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,  
on our lips there were songs. (R.)
2. The heathens themselves said: 'What  
marvels  
the Lord worked for them!  
What marvels the Lord worked for us!  
Indeed we were glad. (R.)
3. Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage  
as streams in dry land.  
Those who are sowing in tears  
will sing when they reap. (R.)
4. They go out, they go out, full of tears,  
carrying seed for the sowing;  
they come back, they come back,  
full of song,  
carrying their sheaves. (R.)

### Second Reading Phil 3:8-14

*Because of Christ I look upon everything else as useless in  
order to gain him.*

I believe nothing can happen that will  
outweigh the supreme advantage of  
knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For him I have  
accepted the loss of everything, and I look  
on everything as so much rubbish if only I  
can have Christ and be given a place in him.

I am no longer trying for perfection by my  
own efforts, the perfection that comes from  
the Law, but I want only the perfection that  
comes through faith in Christ, and is from  
God and based on faith. All I want is to know  
Christ and the power of his resurrection and  
to share his sufferings by reproducing the  
pattern of his death. That is the way I can  
hope to take my place in the resurrection  
of the dead. Not that I have become perfect  
yet: I have not yet won, but I am still running,  
trying to capture the prize for which Christ  
Jesus captured me. I can assure you my  
brothers, I am far from thinking that I have  
already won. All I can say is that I forget the  
past and I strain ahead for what is still to  
come; I am racing for the finish, for the prize  
to which God calls us upwards to receive in  
Christ Jesus.

### Gospel Acclamation Jl 2:12-13

*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
king of endless glory!*

*With all your heart turn to me,  
for I am tender and compassionate.*

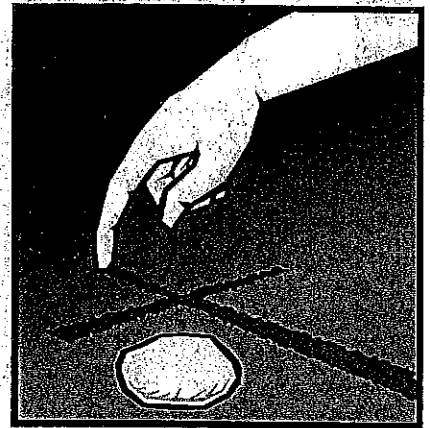
*Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
king of endless glory!*

### Gospel Jn 8:1-11

*Let the person without sin be the first to throw a stone.*

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At  
daybreak he appeared in the Temple again;  
and as all the people came to him, he sat  
down and began to teach them.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman  
along who had been caught committing  
adultery; and making her stand there in  
full view of everybody, they said to Jesus,  
'Master, this woman was caught in the very  
act of committing adultery, and Moses has  
ordered us in the Law to condemn women  
like this to death by stoning. What have  
you to say?' They asked him this as a test,  
looking for something to use against him.  
But Jesus bent down and started writing on  
the ground with his finger. As they persisted  
with their question, he looked up and said,  
'If there is one of you who has not sinned,  
let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'  
Then he bent down and wrote on the ground  
again. When they heard this they went away  
one by one, beginning with the eldest, until  
Jesus was left alone with the woman, who  
remained standing there. He looked up and  
said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one  
condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she replied.  
'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus 'go  
away, and don't sin any more.'



### Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

The accusers of this woman make  
her 'stand there in full view of  
everybody.' She is surrounded by  
the hostile glare of eyes filled with  
blood lust.

It is only when the accusers have  
left in embarrassment that Jesus,  
who has been bent to the ground,  
looks up at her. He adopts the  
posture of a slave, seeing her as  
she could be if she gives up her  
current pattern of behaviour.

Up till now, *no-one* has spoken to  
this woman. Now Jesus treats her  
as a human being worth speaking  
to. And what does she hear? That  
he does not condemn her but  
points her to a new sort of life in  
the future.

We could pause for a moment to  
allow Jesus the time to look at us,  
talk to us, in that way. Do you have  
the courage to 'look eyes' with  
Jesus and live out the  
consequences?

'The eyes have it.'

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