



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 26th March 2023 - The Fifth Sunday in Lent

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

Taken from the Gospel for Sunday 26th March 2023 - The Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45)

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 not end 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 learned that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judaea.' 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.

3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

This is the third of the great Johannine gospel readings on the Sundays of Lent which lead up to and prepare us for the baptisms of the new members of Christ at the Easter Vigil; today's gospel grips us with the story of Jesus' gift of life to his friend Lazarus. This is not the same thing as the gift of life to us by Jesus in the resurrection, for Lazarus returns to ordinary human life, and will die again, whereas the Christian resurrection transforms us into a new way of life, giving us a life which is a participation in the divine life for ever. Rather, the resurrection of Lazarus is the last and greatest of Jesus' signs, his marvellous works which point towards and hint at this final gift of divine life. The first of the signs was the transformation of the water of the Law into the wine of the messianic wedding banquet at Cana. These signs show who Jesus really is. As well as showing the divine power of Jesus – for only God can give life – they also show the real, human love of Jesus for his friends. He is upset by Lazarus' death and weeps for him, sharing the human sorrow of his family as he shares our sorrows too.

Is death something to fear?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



**The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph**

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 26th March 2023



First Reading: *The New Spirit*

Ezekiel 37:12-14

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 resettle you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this' - it is the Lord who speaks.

At the darkest moment of Israel's history, when they are hopeless exiles in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel foretells a rebirth. In a great vision, of which we read only three paltry verses, he sees a valley full of dead bones. The Lord commands him to breathe on them, and in Hebrew the same word is used for breath and Spirit. So when Ezekiel breathes on them he breathes the enlivening Spirit of the Lord. The bones come together, are covered with flesh and sinews, and become 'a great, an immense army'. The prophet is foretelling the rebirth of Israel as a nation, prophesying that they will return to life once again in the Promised Land. We can, however, read this prophecy in the light of the biblical revelation as a whole, and see that it is hinting at and mysteriously suggesting a further meaning. In this fullness of meaning the Church has always understood the prophecy as a promise of personal resurrection through the Spirit of God. We are on the threshold of the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ at Easter, and so of our own resurrection in Him. This reading partners today's gospel reading about the new life given to Lazarus.

What is this resurrection to which we look forward?

Second Reading: *The Gift of the Spirit*

Romans 8:8-11

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.

In the preceding chapters of the Letter to the Romans Paul has described and analysed the process of salvation through Jesus' offering of himself in loving obedience to his Father, and our own integration into Christ by being plunged into him in baptism, and so joining him in his death and resurrection. This eighth chapter is the chapter of the Spirit, considering how we are transformed by the Spirit of Christ, now become our own spirit, through which we live. The Spirit of the Risen Christ is already in us and is empowering us, but our bodies are not yet transformed, as they will be in the final resurrection. In the later Pauline epistles (Colossians and Ephesians) this is expressed differently: God has already brought you to life with Christ; you have already been raised up; it remains only for this risen life to be revealed with him in glory (Colossians 2:12; 3:4). The Spirit of God and of Christ, described in the Johannine writings as the Paraclete or Helper, leads us into all truth, giving us an ever deeper appreciation of God's gifts to us. The Spirit also gives us strength and zeal to do God's work in all our ways of life.

How can the Spirit change our lives?

“The Spiritgives us strength and zeal to do God's work in all our ways of life.”

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*
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