

## FIRST READING – A LENT 5

A reading from the book of the prophet Ezekiel.

**Pause – and look up at the assembly**

Thus says the Lord God:

“I am going to open your graves,  
and bring you up from your graves, O my people;  
and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.  
And you shall know that I am the Lord,  
when I open your graves,  
and bring you up from your graves, O my people.  
I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live,  
and I will place you on your own soil;  
then you shall know that I, the Lord,  
have spoken and will act,” says the Lord.

**Pause for THREE seconds**

**then look up at the people**

**and say SLOWLY:**

The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## **SECOND READING – A LENT 5**

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

**Pause – and look up at the assembly**

Brothers and sisters:

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh;

you are in the Spirit,

since the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ

does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you,

though the body is dead because of sin,

the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,

he who raised Christ from the dead

will give life to your mortal bodies also

through his Spirit that dwells in you.

**Pause for THREE seconds**

**then look up at the people**

**and say SLOWLY:**

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The WORD of the LORD.

*Thanks be to God.*

## GOSPEL READING – A LENT 5

The Lord be with you.

*And with your spirit.*

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

*Glory to you, O Lord*

Now a certain man, Lazarus, was ill.  
He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.  
Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume  
and wiped his feet with her hair;  
her brother Lazarus was ill.  
So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,  
“Lord, he whom you love is ill.”  
But when Jesus heard it, he said,  
“This illness does not lead to death;  
rather it is for God’s glory,  
so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,  
after having heard that Lazarus was ill,  
he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.  
Then after this he said to the disciples,  
“Let us go to Judea again.”  
The disciples said to him,  
“Rabbi, the people were just now trying to stone you,  
and are you going there again?”  
Jesus answered,  
“Are there not twelve hours of daylight?  
Those who walk during the day do not stumble,  
because they see the light of this world.  
But those who walk at night stumble,  
because the light is not in them.”  
After saying this, he told them,  
“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep,  
but I am going there to awaken him.”  
The disciples said to him,  
“Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.”  
Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death,  
but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep.  
Then Jesus told them plainly,  
“Lazarus is dead.



## **GOSPEL READING (CTD.) – A LENT 5**

For your sake I am glad I was not there,  
so that you may believe.  
But let us go to him.”  
Thomas, who was called the Twin,  
said to his fellow disciples,  
“Let us also go, that we may die with him.”  
When Jesus arrived,  
he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.  
Now Bethany was near Jerusalem,  
some two miles away,  
and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary  
to console them about their brother.  
When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him,  
while Mary stayed at home.  
Martha said to Jesus,  
“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.  
But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.”  
Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha said to him,  
“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”  
Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.  
Those who believe in me,  
even though they die, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.  
Do you believe this?”  
She said to him,  
“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ,  
the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”  
When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary,  
and told her privately,  
“The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”  
And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.  
Now Jesus had not yet come to the village,  
but was still at the place where Martha had met him.  
The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her,  
saw Mary get up quickly and go out.  
They followed her because they thought  
that she was going to the tomb to weep there.  
When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him,  
she knelt at his feet and said to him,  
“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”



## **GOSPEL READING (CTD.) – A LENT 5**

When Jesus saw her weeping,  
and the Jews who came with her also weeping,  
he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.  
Jesus said, “Where have you laid him?”  
They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”  
Jesus began to weep.  
So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”  
But some of them said,  
“Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man  
have kept this man from dying?”  
Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb.  
It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.  
Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”  
Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him,  
“Lord, already there is a stench  
because he has been dead four days.”  
Jesus said to her,  
“Did I not tell you that if you believed,  
you would see the glory of God?”  
So they took away the stone.  
And Jesus looked upward and said,  
“Father, I thank you for having heard me.  
I knew that you always hear me,  
but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here,  
so that they may believe that you sent me.”  
When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice,  
“Lazarus, come out!”  
The dead man came out,  
his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth,  
and his face wrapped in a cloth.  
Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”  
Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary  
and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.



## SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

The purpose of the Lenten readings is to prepare for the participation in the paschal feast.

The Old Testament readings focus upon salvation history as the presupposition of, preparation for, and in some respects a prefiguring of, the redemptive act of God in Christ.

The second readings set forth our participation in the death and resurrection of Christ through baptism and in the Christian life.

The gospel readings of series A, after the accounts of the temptation and the transfiguration, which are traditional on the first two Sundays, take up the great Johannine signs, which are prefigurations both of the saving events of Christ's death and resurrection and of our participation in those saving events through baptism.

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### Reading I: Ezekiel 37:12-14

The three readings of this Sunday fit together beautifully, for all concern the resurrection to newness of life. The passage from Ezekiel concludes and interprets the vision of the valley of dry bones (obviously a battlefield) that are gradually restored to life. The interpretation identifies the bones with Israel in exile, and the resurrection of the bones with Israel's restoration to its homeland after the Babylonian exile.

However, it is interesting to note how the text shifts from the dry bones to graves: "I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves." This shift suggests that already by Ezekiel's time (see Isa 26:19) the expectation of a general resurrection at the last day was beginning to emerge, an expectation that was to be developed in later apocalyptic literature.

But that is not the point here. Rather, the language of this future hope is transferred to Israel's return from exile. It will be like resurrection from the grave. In this figurative resurrection God will bring God's people to newness of life and put God's Spirit within them.

These twin themes—the restoration of God's people and the eschatological resurrection of the dead—thus start hand in hand as they will continue through apocalyptic literature to the New Testament.

### Responsorial Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8\*

The juxtaposition of two passages of Scripture often brings out new meanings in them. This is what happens here.

Usually one thinks of the *De profundis* as a penitential psalm, but when it is placed side by side with Ezekiel's vision, it acquires a new emphasis: it is both the cry of the individual in the depths of sin and death and also the cry of the people of God (note the shift at the end of the third through the fourth stanza from the individual to the community) for restoration from exile in the land of darkness and the shadow of death.

This hoped-for corporate redemption occurred in Israel's restoration from exile. It is still the hope of the Christian community in which the Spirit dwells, and it is to be finally fulfilled in the general resurrection from the dead.

## **Reading II: Romans 8:8-11**

The same two-level use of language is continued in this reading. The first level, that of resurrection from the dead, is now applied to Christ. God raised Jesus from the dead by his Spirit (see Rom 1:4). Now Christians, through their baptism, have received the indwelling of the Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead: "the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

This is the second level—the restoration of the people of God to newness of life (note the words "because of righteousness"; as we saw on the third Sunday of Lent, the new life created by the indwelling Spirit is the effect of justification).

Finally, the first level of resurrection is still expected by Christians, too: "he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies." The risen life of the church in the Spirit is an anticipation of the general resurrection at the last day.

The biblical hope is not a belief in the intrinsic immortality of the person, as though there were some part of us, such as the soul or the spirit that is in and by itself immortal. The whole person—body, soul, and spirit—is subject to decay and death.

But Christ has broken this subjection; he has burst the bonds of decay and death by his resurrection from the dead, in which he was raised to a totally transformed existence.

Through baptism believers have received the indwelling Spirit, as a result of which resurrection and renewal of the whole person, body and soul, has been initiated.

True, even the bodies of Christians are still subject to sickness, decay, and death. But the indwelling Spirit is a sign in our mortal bodies that betokens the beginning of a new life that cannot be destroyed by death.

This, as Oscar Cullmann has suggested, is manifested in two ways: in the daily renewal of our inward self (2 Cor 4:16; cf. Eph 3:16) and in the occurrence of miracles of healing in the bodies of Christians.

The present indwelling of the Spirit is an anticipation (of) the complete renewal of life that will come at the general resurrection.

### **Gospel: John 11:1-45**

Here again the evangelist has combined a narrative from his source, which consisted of seven miracle stories, with a body of discourse material. In the original source, the raising of Lazarus would have been a straightforward story of a resuscitation. Similar stories are the raising of Jairus' daughter and of the son of the widow of Naim.

But note the progression of the miraculous: Jairus' daughter had just died; the widow's son was being carried to the grave, so he must have died earlier that day, for Jewish Law required interment within twenty-four hours; but Lazarus had been dead for four days already.

The evangelist has placed the raising of Lazarus at a crucial point in Jesus' career. It occasions his final journey to Judea and Jerusalem, and the sensation created by Lazarus' resuscitation sets in motion the events that will lead to the Crucifixion.

Contrast this with the Synoptic accounts, where the cleansing of the Temple leads to the Sanhedrin's decision to get rid of Jesus. One should not try to harmonize the accounts. The Synoptic accounts look closer to history, and in John's source the cleansing of the temple, now transferred for programmatic reasons to chapter 2, was probably in a similar position.

The evangelist has also placed the story of Lazarus here for theological reasons. Jesus goes to his death as the one who is the resurrection and the life and who will die to inaugurate the resurrection of all. The theological interpretation is brought out by the dialogue and discourse material with which the evangelist framed the story itself.

Therefore, the high point of this Gospel is the great pronouncement of verses 25-26: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

This serves the same function as "I am the light of the world" in the healing of the blind man in chapter 9.

The short form of the Gospel prunes away some of the dialogue material, the preliminary discussion between Jesus and his disciples (Jn 11:8-16), and some of the narrative detail (Jn 11:18-19, 28-32a), and in so doing throws the central pronouncement into sharper relief.

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