



Opening Prayer for Lent

Light a candle, observe a
minute of silence then
recite together:

**Loving and Merciful God,
You give us these Holy
Days of Lent for our
conversion, in order to
prepare for your
Resurrection.**

**Help us to recognize your
call each day so that we
may one day rise to new
life.**

**Keep us close to you and
each other as we share
faith, serve those in need
and worship you in Spirit
and in Truth.
-AMEN**

Seasons of Faith

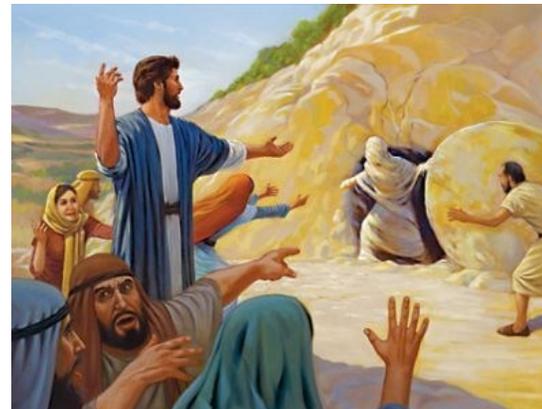
April 2, 2017 ❖ Fifth Sunday in Lent 📖 Ezekiel 37:12-14, Romans 8:8-11, John 11:1-45

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“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.”

These words of Jesus, spoken before the tomb of Lazarus bring us to the reality of the Communion of Saints. The spirit of our prayer in community is a powerful one. The elevation of our heart and soul to God projects an aura of God’s presence into our environment. It is a moment of reconciliation between the one praying and those joining in prayer.

The moment is an experience of mission. It is a moment of deep faith in the presence of God in all His people. This is not a moment of personal admiration but a moment of recognition of the presence of the Divine Spirit in us all. *“But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin,*



the spirit is alive because of righteousness.” (Rom 8; 10) We are called to live the mission received from Christ to baptize all people. Our lives are not superficial imitations of the words and actions of Christ. As St. Paul reminds us, our lives are the life of Christ. As today’s quote from Romans tells us, *“If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you.” (Rom. 8; 11)*

This our call; this is our mission.

Questions for Sharing

1. **For Ezekiel:** The Lord gives us His Spirit so that we may live. Share a time you felt the Spirit alive and burning in your heart. What did it lead you to do?
2. **For Romans:** Paul tells us that if Christ dwells in us, our spirit will always be alive. What in your life makes you feel most alive? Why?
3. **For John:** Jesus tells us that “whoever believes in him will never die.” Share a specific time you showed that you believed in Jesus Christ through your words or actions. In what ways did this situation give you life?
4. **For the reflection:** At this moment, in what ways does your life resemble Jesus’ life? What is one change you can show He dwells in you?

Walking the Talk

"Lord, if you had been here..."

Today's Gospel shows that sometimes adversity brings people closer to God. Jesus uses Lazarus' illness and death to demonstrate the power of God through him, not for his own sake but for the sake of his disciples, for our sake! Jesus uses the adversity of the natural consequence of Lazarus' illness and death to bring us, not only closer to him, but also to allow us to trust that He is with us when despair might rule the day. This week:

- Recall a memory when you were able to overcome despair or fear. What or who helped you go through this difficult time. Dedicate some time giving thanks to God for all that helped you during this time in your life.
- Reflect and share in your group or family about a dream you thought was impossible and it came true. What role, if any, did God have in the fulfillment of your dream? Take some time to encourage someone else to follow their dreams.

Committed to New Life

Stepping Outside Ourselves

"Please do not withdraw into yourselves! This is a danger: we shut ourselves up in the parish, with our friends, within the movement, with the like-minded... but do you know what happens? When the Church becomes closed, she becomes an ailing Church, she falls ill! That is a danger. . . .A Church closed in on herself is the same, a sick Church". (Pope Francis, 5/18/13)

- Write a note to a ministry group in your parish thanking them for the way their service impacts your faith. Ask them if you could assist them in a project. Tell them about your own ministry in your small faith community/faith sharing group and invite them to one of your meetings.
- If you have children in a religious education program, or even if you do not, offer to assist the catechists in one of their weekly classes or a special task they might be planning for the class.



Strength for the Journey

Seasonal Rituals To Celebrate Faith and Life

Rooted in Giving

(For the prayer center, include a cross, a bible and a candle. You may also include a purple tablecloth, some rocks or a dry branch to observe the Lenten Time. Have a half-sheet blank piece of paper for each participant. Also have a pencil or pen for each person.)



Leader: We gather this day to recognize that we must always give our best in as many ways as we can. Jesus, says "give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." (Luke 6:38)

All: Lord, help us to remember that all we have is to be shared, especially with those that are most in need. With your example, you show us to share our treasures with others. Empty our minds and hearts from greed so that we can give whole-heartily in your Name.

Reader 1: In times of chaos and doubt..... Give peace.

All: For the measure we give, will be the measure we receive.

Reader 2: In times of hatred and loneliness Give love.

All: For the measure we give, will be the measure we receive.

Reader 3: In times of hurt and confusion Give mercy.

All: For the measure we give, will be the measure we receive.

Reader 4: In times of loss and sadness Give hope.

All: For the measure we give, will be the measure we receive.

All: Lord, help us refocus our eyes to see that all that we have is given to us to do Your work. We give you thanks for trusting us with all these blessings and may we always strive to give without asking for anything in return. We ask you this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.