

Fifth Sunday of Lent – April 2, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Ezekiel 37:12-14

Thus says the Lord GOD: O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and have you rise from them, O my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may live, and I will settle you upon your land; thus you shall know that I am the LORD. I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

Psalm: Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

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

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
LORD, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to my voice in supplication.

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,
LORD, who can stand?
But with you is forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

I trust in the LORD;
my soul trusts in his word.
More than sentinels wait for the dawn,
let Israel wait for the LORD.

For with the LORD is kindness
and with him is plenteous redemption;
and he will redeem Israel
from all their iniquities.

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:8-11

Brothers and sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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 dwelling in you.

Gospel: John 11:1-45

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill. So the sisters sent word to Jesus saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in a day? If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." He said this, and then told them, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep,

but I am going to awaken him." So the disciples said to him, "Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved." But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. So then Jesus said to them clearly, "Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him." So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go to die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, "The teacher is here and is asking for you." As soon as she heard this, she rose quickly and went to him. For Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still where Martha had met him. So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her saw Mary get up quickly and go out, they followed her, presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Sir, come and see." And Jesus wept. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him." But some of them said, "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?"

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. 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." And when he had said this, he cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

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Prayer for the Beatification of Servants of God Antonio Cuipa (Queepa) and Companions

O God, Father of all nations, you have summoned us to announce the freedom of your children. We thank you for calling your servants, Antonio Cuipa (Queepa) and his companions, to proclaim the Catholic faith during the birth of a new nation. May their example of suffering and forgiveness give us the courage to bear witness to Christ in our own time. We also pray that they be counted one day among your saints. Through the intercession of your Servants, grant us the following grace which we ask from your loving kindness. **(pause for a moment to make your prayer request, your prayer intention)** We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

The Gospel for Sunday declares that “Jesus loved Martha and Mary, her sister, and their brother, Lazarus.” This is a golden statement. It tells us so much about Jesus and his personal friendships. But it also emphasizes how very odd it was that, while Lazarus was sick unto death, Jesus camped out a fairly short distance away and did not go to heal his friend. Messages arrived calling for him. An easy journey. But no. His reason? “This illness is not going to end in death,” he says. What? He is wrong! The illness of Lazarus led directly to death!

Life is something you can have only because you are rooted in love.

When Lazarus did die, and had been in the tomb for four days, Jesus finally decided to go down to Bethany. Martha ran to him there and she quietly went back for Mary, who was so grieved that she would not leave home! Each in her turn cried out, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died!” When Jesus saw Mary’s tears and those of the friends who had gathered, we behold a touching revelation. The famous words that came next are unlike any others in the Gospels: And Jesus wept. His tears make Mary and Martha’s question even more poignant. (I paraphrase): “You love us and you loved him; why did you not come and cure him before he died?” I think many of us ask God that very question when a loved one dies. “God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Pretend that you are asking this question directly to Jesus right now, about a sorrow of yours. Listen to whatever answer comes. Take your time. If what you hear is fruitful, please stay with it. For my part, I hear Jesus saying this: Friend, I know that life, love, and death are hard for you to comprehend. I have revealed them in my flesh, but of course any example can be ambiguous. Not only life but even death and even sorrow *are given within God’s gentle love*. They are like flowers pushing up from the earth. The ground from which they push is God’s kind and deep care. Even life gets its being from God’s love. Even death gets its life from God’s love. At this point you and I, startled, interrupt and say, Wait! How can death receive life? Death is the end of life. What are you talking about? Jesus seems to reply that there are many beautiful plants and trees that come forth from God’s earth. Life is surely one of them, he says. But death is, too, and suffering as well. Let me show you, he says. He calls out in a loud voice, calls into the soil of God-love where Lazarus’ soul is held tight. From this womb of love, death gestates into life. Out of the tomb he walks. It is as if Jesus says to us, you always think of love as what you have because you have life. But the opposite is true. *Life is something you can have only because you are rooted in love*. Death does not erase love, it brings you more deeply back into it, to the place you came from—the rich loam of love. Pray about it, Jesus says, because that is the reason I delayed going to Bethany.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Would your actions change if you really believed you had access to the Holy Spirit at all times? How?
2. St. Paul said, “Those of you who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Do you think he meant, “Those of you who are led by the temptations of the flesh cannot please God?” Is there a difference? ”
3. How do all the elements in the story of the raising of Lazarus point to Jesus’ words, “I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live”? Compare Jesus’ statement, “Untie him and let him go,” with Moses’ statement to the Pharaoh, “Let my people go.”

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen