

Fifth Sunday in Lent Year A, 29th March 2020
With the Lord there is Mercy and Redemption



The Lighting of a Candle

We light this candle to remind us that the love of God is like a light in our darkness.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever.

Amen.

Let us worship God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

This is the day that the Lord has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Lord, direct our thoughts, and teach us to pray.
Lift up our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

God our Father,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins.
For turning away from you,
and ignoring your will for our lives;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For behaving just as we wish,
without thinking of you;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For failing you by what we do
and think and say;
Father forgive us:
save us and help us.

For letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

For living as if we were ashamed to belong to your Son;
Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.

May the God of Love bring us back to himself, forgive us our sins, and assure us of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Blessed is the Lord
for he has heard the voice of our prayer;
therefore shall our hearts dance for joy
and in our song we will praise our God.

The Collect for the day

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Hearing and responding to the Word of God

Although our liturgy brings us nearer this week to the climax of Passiontide, our readings are full of hope and life.

In our First Reading, the people of Israel are exiled in Babylon. The prophet tells them that God will put a new spirit in them and raise them from their graves.

The Psalm is a prayer of trust in God, who is full of mercy and compassion. He will redeem Israel.

In the Second Reading, St Paul tells us that because we have received the Spirit of Christ, then 'he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies.'

The Gospel unites all these themes of mercy and trust, of death and life, of redemption and resurrection, in the miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This great sign of Jesus being 'the resurrection and the life' leads us into the coming weeks.

As we contemplate these readings this week, may we draw closer to our Lord and accompany him as he sets his face towards Jerusalem.

Psalm 130 Living Bible (from Biblegateway)

130 O Lord, from the depths of despair I cry for your help: ²“Hear me! Answer! Help me!”

³⁻⁴ Lord, if you keep in mind our sins, then who can ever get an answer to his prayers? But you forgive! What an awesome thing this is! ⁵ That is why I wait expectantly, trusting God to help, for he has promised. ⁶ I long for him more than sentinels long for the dawn.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord; for he is loving and kind and comes to us with armloads of salvation. ⁸ He himself shall ransom Israel from her slavery to sin.

How do I feel as I settle to pray today?

Whatever my feelings, I know the Lord accepts me as I am. I place myself in his hands and ask him to help me pray.

I take the psalm. I read it slowly a couple of times.

Where do I find that it answers my own feelings of despondency, guilt ... of hope, trust, longing and waiting ...?

The psalmist seems to suggest that I 'cry' to the Lord, whatever my situation. Is it the case? How do I speak to the Lord?

I may ask him to increase my faith and confidence in his mercy and forgiveness. His saving love is unconditional.

I pray that others may come to realise this too, and be drawn out 'of the depths'.

I speak to the Lord, and I end my prayer in the spirit of gratitude.

John 11:1-45 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) (from Bible Gateway)

The Death of Lazarus

11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,^[a] “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴ 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." ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus^[b] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin,^[c] said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus^[d] had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles^[e] away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.^[f] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,^[g] the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

Jesus Weeps

²⁸ 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." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ 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. ³² 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." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came

with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ 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." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² 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." ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ 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."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

As I prepare myself, I take the time to relax into God's presence, breathing in his life and love.

When I am ready, I turn to this Gospel. I may prefer to take the whole text and slowly absorb the drama and confrontation involved ... or I may focus on certain elements.

What aspect strikes me most?

As I place myself in the scene, with whom or what do I identify most: with Martha's faith, Jesus's anguish, the doubtful crowd ...?

In what ways do I myself need to be unbound?

Or can I help others to be more free?

Prayers of Intercession

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,

and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

God who made everyone and who may be found in every place

Bless our parishes and Benefice, prosper our attempts to be faithful to you and to draw others
to you.

Inspire us by the power of your Holy Spirit that we may be a caring people, the true
community of the body of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord:
thanks be to God.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit, be with us all now and evermore. Amen.**

Here's a text if you've only got a minute...

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

**With the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption.** *Psalm*

The Spirit of God has made his home in you.*Second Reading*

'Unbind him, let him go free!' *Gospel*

*This week's texts if you want to reflect further
Ezekiel 37: 12-14; Psalm 129 (130); Romans 8: 8-11; John 11: 1-4.*



**'Lazarus,
come forth!'**



Adapted from material prepared by St Beuno's Outreach in the Diocese of Wrexham.