

Fifth Sunday of Lent

March 22, 2026

Rising from your grave.

His Spirit dwelling in you.

Lazarus, come out.

rvb.

Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent. – March 23.

Daniel 12:41-62 – Crusty, lusty hearts /She mourns her virginity/The elders are raped.

John 8:1-11 – Hypocrites hunger /A woman squirms in the dust/Jesus lifts her up.

Prayer. God, if a mother were ever to forget her child, you would always remember me.

Coping with stress. Stay flexible.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Encouraging. No one likes a wet blanket. Be encouraging when your friends share their problems with you. Be supportive when they tell you about their goals.**
- 2. Be Enthusiastic. Life is too beautiful to live with dread and boredom. Embrace every day with joy and love. Start every day on a fresh start! Approach every situation with excitement! And bring this energy to everything you do and everyone you meet. :)**

Quotation. “Be the change you want to see in the world.” Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869-1948)

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent – March 24.

Numbers 21:4-9 – Mumbler, complainer/ Biters are bitten, then healed/ A medic's symbol.

John 8:21-30 – Speaking in riddles/ Lift him up and you will know/ Who is this? I AM.

Prayer. Bind up my wounds. Heal me and make me whole and holy in your sight.

Coping with stress. Eliminate negative self-talk; “I am getting too old.”

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Hardworking / Diligent. Without challenging work, we cannot get far in life. I have seen people who like to take the easy way out and this is not what I promote. There are no quick tricks that will give you instantaneous results — in the end, it is about showing up and doing the work.**
- 2. Be Helpful. Offer your help even if people do not ask for it. There is always something you can do for others.**

Quotation. “We are all Americans who, because of our cultural heritage, contribute something unique to the fabric of American life. We are like the notes in a chord of music – if all the notes were the same there would be no harmony, no real beauty, because harmony is based on differences, not similarities.” Rosa Guerrero (1934-)

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent – The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord. – March 25.

Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10 – Asking for a sign/The Lord will give you this sign/ His name, Emmanuel.

Hebrews 10:4-10 –No sin offerings /God, I come to do your will/ The Body of Christ.

Luke 1:26-28 – Mary, full of grace/ Gabriel appears to Mary/The Lord is with you.

Prayer. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you, and we pray that you will be with us now and at the hour of our death.

Coping with stress. Tackle one project, or accomplish one at a time.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Honest. To lie is to shrink into a lesser self; To tell the truth means to take a step up in your growth. (Unless there is a higher value at stake, such as protecting someone’s well-being.) One of my values is truth: to discover the truth through personal experience and by constantly challenging what is around me, and to be truthful in everything I do and say. I do not achieve this 100% of the time, but I do my best to uphold it every moment of the day.**
- 2. Be Humble. Arrogant people suffer from an inferiority complex, which is why they feel the need to parade their accomplishments. Learn to be humble. There is no need to repeatedly talk about what you have achieved just to assert your ability — when your work is good, the results will speak for themselves. (The exception is in professional contexts like on your resume or in interviews, where you are supposed to display your accomplishments.)**

Quotation. “At the start of the twentieth century, over 98 percent of Black people in the United States were native born- a much higher percentage than for whites. Black people are as American as you can get.” (Marguerite Wright)

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent. - March 26.

Genesis 17:3-9 – Covenant corner/ God takes the initiative/ A nation is born.

John 8:51-59 – Escape artist/ Free from the clutches of death/ Dodging the rock throwers.

Prayer. God, you overwhelm me with your surprising gifts of grace which are unforgettable and unforeseeable.

Coping with stress. Go easy on criticism or judgment of another.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Independent. Learn to manage your life. Learn to tackle your problems by yourself, without imposing on others. Feel free to approach others if you need help, but you should never expect them to solve your problems for you.**
- 2. Be Individualistic. Always be you. Do not try to be anyone else.**

Quotation. “Come from where it may, racism divides.” Jose Marti (1853-1895)

Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent. -March 27.

Jeremiah 20:10-13 -Paranoid prophet/ God calms a fearful psyche /True vindication.

John 10:31-42 – Words thrown like rocks/ Blasphemer blames the sinners/ Creeping, crouching men.

Prayer. In the throes of suffering and pain. You lighten my burden with healing words and touches.

Coping with stress. Shun the superman or superwoman urge.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Prudent.** Be bold and daring, but at the same time exercise caution. A touch of practicality never hurts anyone; it helps you to be more ready for what is ahead.
- 2. Be Purposeful.** Pursue a cause that is higher and larger than you. When you do that, you will naturally grow into someone bigger than who you are today. Pursuing my purpose to help others grow has made me embark on journeys and make decisions that I would not have pursued if I was just living my life for myself.

Quotation. “Most of the people I meet in America are compassionate. Why is it that individually we can be so compassionate and collectively we can be so harsh? I do not have an answer to that.” Jonathan Kozol (1936-)

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent. -March 28.

Ezeckiel 37:21-28 – A close encounter/ Shepherd embraces the sheep/ North and south are one.

John 11:45-56 – A lamb among wolves/ They plot, scheme, and lick their chops/ Hatred multiplies.

Prayer. At times I am wild and wooly. Good Shepherd, calm me and guide me with your presence.

Coping with stress. Step back or give in if you find yourself defiant, stubborn, and being involved in misunderstandings with others.

Two Good Deeds for personal growth and the welfare of others:

- 1. Be Fair.**
 - a. Do not bad mouth other people. Do not speak ill of people behind their backs, because it is unfair to them and does not give them a chance to defend themselves. Let the person**

know if you do not like something he/she did, otherwise let it go.

- b. Do not discriminate. Give equal treatment to everyone, regardless of race, language, religion, nationality, gender, age, social status, and financial status.
- c. Do not judge. Do not make conclusions about others' character or their life based on 1-2 things you see about them. Always give others the benefit of the doubt.
- d. Uphold justice. If you see unfairness being exacted, right the wrong. This includes intervening when someone is being bullied and standing up for someone when he/she is being unfairly judged.

- 2. Have Faith. Do not put too much pressure on an event or a person to give you the results you seek. Do your best within your capacity and have faith that everything will fall into place.

Quotation. "The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be either good or evil." Hannah Arendt (1898-1989).

"It is in Jesus that we live, move, and have our being." Acts 17:28.

Roger J. Vanden Busch

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Lazarus, come out.

Rvb.

Reading I

[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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures |

Prior to this reading from Ezekiel, the author uses the vision of “dry bones” referring to the Jews in exile to be as dead as the bones of dead people scattered on a battlefield: “The Valley of Dry Bones.”

Chapter 37:1-11- “The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” Maybe when in grade

school you learned about the bones of the body by singing the following song:

**“Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones,
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones,
Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones,
Now shake dem skeleton bones!**

**The toe bone's connected to the foot bone,
The foot bone's connected to the ankle bone,
The ankle bone's connected to the leg bone,
Now shake dem skeleton bones!**

**The leg bone's connected to the knee bone,
The knee bone's connected to the thigh bone,
The thigh bone's connected to the hip bone,
Now shake dem skeleton bones!”**

**The Lord injects new life into these bones, breathing a living and dynamic spirit into them. God resettles the bones upon their own land
God is the author and sustainer of life.**

Ezekiel is exclaiming that the Lord God is continually with us and for us. We are in process, moving through our desert experiences with its prayerful peaks and empty valleys. Our lives can be filled with dry bones: tradition, guidelines, norms, laws, canons, dogmas, commandments, obligations, regulations, vows, truths, assumptions, stories, constitutions, habits, and institutional structures which can dry us up and waste us away.

As we live our lives, can these dry bones come alive? Can we internalize and assimilate them? Can we begin to experience them as an “insider?” There are times, however, when experience verifies that these realities can be empty and meaningless. When attending the Eucharist we are merely going through the motions or attending the Eucharist because it is an obligation. Do we find ourselves uttering responses that have become rote recitations – “and also with your spirit.” Consequently, such dry bones remain just that – dry bones. We can learn much and be inspired by novelists, psychologists, theologians, psychiatrists, and philosophers to help us revive our drooping spirits, and to bring life to our dry bones. The author, Flannery O’Connor once wrote to a new convert that one does not join the Catholic Church, one “becomes a Catholic.” This is a lengthy process, in which grace, the will, the mind, the soul,

education, the sacraments, and more importantly our daily experiences are essential. In a letter to a friend, Flannery wrote, "What one has as a born Catholic is something given and accepted before it is experienced. I am only slowly coming to experience things that I have all along accepted and experienced both, and that I have just not got that far all the time. Conviction without experience makes for harshness." The psychologist William James emphasizes that it is imperative to begin with a person's religious experiences. Abraham Maslow, another psychologist concerns himself with examining personal revelations, the "peak experiences" and "personal illuminations." Rudolph Otto, philosopher and theologian, makes a plea for the non-rational side of religion as the well-spring of every religious experience. Theologian Ladislaus Boros, building on the insights of philosophers, Blondel, Marechal and Bergson maintain that there is in us a striving of the will to find meaning in the experiences of our lives which were reinforced by psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl. It is an unconscious "reaching out" towards others and God. Flannery uses both assumed truth and concrete experience in the making of her stories. She lived in her stories. Theologian, John Shea states that "We are stories that God tells, and the greatest story God has told is that of

his son, Jesus.” It is the divine indwelling of the Risen Lord that shakes and rattles our dry bones into a living and loving being made in the image and likeness of God.

Responsorial Psalm

[Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8](#)

R. (7) 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.

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

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,

LORD, who can stand?

But with you is forgiveness,

that you may be revered.

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

I trust in the LORD;

my soul trusts in his word.

More than sentinels wait for the dawn,

let Israel wait for the LORD.

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

For with the LORD is kindness

and with him is plenteous redemption;

And he will redeem Israel

from all their iniquities.

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

Reading II

[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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In Romans, Paul celebrates our new life in Christ. Because of our baptism we are not in flesh or at least we should not be. If we act as if we are still in the flesh, then we are not our true and authentic selves. We have not sufficiently died to our old selves; we have not surrendered ourselves so that we may live. The Holy Spirit dwells within us, and lets the energy and life of the Spirit animate us and fills our sails with everlasting life.

"This presence of the Holy Spirit, his indwelling in human hearts...has a condition: that of love"(Pope Saint John Paul II). So how can we know that the Holy Spirit is operating in our lives? There are so many signs of this in our lives.

Here are ten signs that the Holy Spirit is Living in Your Heart and Dwelling in Your Soul (we should be striving for these):

1. "The first sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit is a powerful and loving fear(respect) which fills the soul with deep reverence for the Majesty of God, whose presence it beholds everywhere

2. The second sign is spiritual joy which the gift of piety causes the true children of God to feel in all acts of devotion done for the honor and service of their heavenly Father.

3. The third sign is a lofty courage preceding from the gift of strength. This is made manifest in courage to stand up against injustices in our own actions and to confront it in others.

4. The fourth sign is an abundance of light, which the Holy Spirit pours into our understanding, to make it capable of everlasting Truth.

5. The fifth sign is that you know that the Eucharist is an ardent source of charity.

6. The sixth sign is that the fruit of the Spirit is present in your life - in your words and actions - for everyone - *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity..."* (Galatians 5:22).

7. The seventh sign is that you feel an inner demand from the Holy Spirit to live in love - to forgive, to serve, to refrain from gossip, to repent when you

fall into sin, etc. *"The Holy Spirit 'dwelling in the human being creates in the soul an inner demand to live in love"* (Pope Saint John Paul II).

8. The eighth sign is that you struggle to *"bear with patience the bad temper of others, their slights and any rudeness they show you"* (Saint John Bosco).

9 The ninth sign is that you know that *"there will always be misunderstandings but that if we put a little bit of the love, understanding, and respect of God in the middle of these disagreements, the offense is softened and no longer felt"* (Venerable Thecla Merlo).

10. The tenth sign is that you strive to love in every situation so that others will find it easier to love because you know that *"by practicing mutual charity you are preparing yourselves to receive all the grace that Jesus wants to give you"* (Venerable Thecla Merlo). -Internet.

Verse Before the Gospel

[John 11:25a, 26](#)

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord;
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will never die.

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 him 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.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

This lengthy Gospel of John highlights the power and presence of God's love for life, giving us a prefiguration of Jesus' own death and experience of new life as expressed in the Resurrection. Jesus' love for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus is clear. Jesus listens, assures, supports, and responds to the women and to Lazarus as he says: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he dies, he shall live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Jesus continues as a life-giver, calling people from rags to riches as he responds to the widow of Naim and the daughter of Jairus. Raymond E. Brown, scripture scholar, says of the Lazarus story: "What is crucial is that Jesus has given physical life as a sign of his power to give eternal life on this earth and as a promise that on the last day he will raise the dead." Now, Lazarus can say, no more rags, only riches! Speaking of the dry bones of Ezekiel, Lazarus' ones are drenched with life as he emerges from darkness into the presence of Jesus' life and the Indwelling of the Spirit. Lazarus is filled with life, yet he needs liberty and freedom to grow into the presence

of God. Jesus says, “Untie him and let him go free” As the poet, T.S. Eliot said so well in his Four Quartets, “We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.”

To receive this life, we must be alive to Jesus. Life is what we are alive to. The boy who flunks geometry because he cannot remember the theorem will remember every incident in the baseball game and the batting averages of all the players. Why? Because he is alive to baseball but dead to geometry. So, it is with us. If the life of God is to become ours, we must be alive to Jesus, alive to His church, alive to prayer, alive to worship, alive to the Christ who comes to us in the sacraments, alive to the Christ who speaks to us personally through the bible, alive to the needs of others in whom Jesus dwells.

Final Prayer: Risen Lord, those who die are not further from us than God, and He is closer to us than we are to our very selves; let us then take consolation that those who die are closer to us because the person is with God. Be with us as we come home to be with you. Amen.