Celebrate

Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 22, 2026

In today's gospel Jesus reveals his power over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. The prophet Ezekiel prophesies God breathing new life into dry bones. To those in exile or living in the shadows of death, these stories proclaim God's promise of resurrection. In baptism we die with Christ that we might also be raised with him to new life. At the Easter Vigil we will welcome the newly baptized as we remember God's unfailing promise in our baptism.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power ofyour Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading — Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is a promise that Israel as a nation, though dead in exile, will live again in their land through God's life-giving spirit. Three times Israel is assured that through this vision they will know that "I am the LORD."

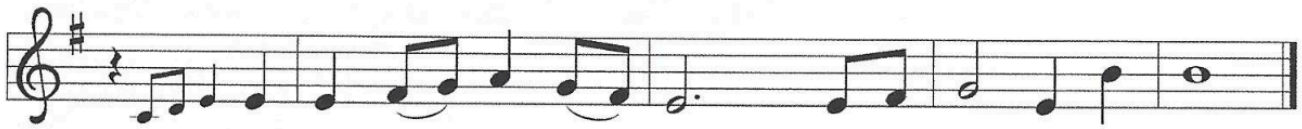
The hand of the LORD came upon me, and
he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD
and set me down in the middle of a valley;
it was full of bones. 2He led me all around
them; there were very many lying in the val-
ley, and they were very dry. 3He said to me,
"Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O
Lord GOD, you know." 4Then he said to me,
"Prophesy to these bones and say to them: O
dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5Thus
says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause
breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6I will
lay sinews on you and will cause flesh to come
upon you and cover you with skin and put
breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall
know that I am the LORD."

7So I prophesied as I had been com-
manded, and as I prophesied, suddenly
there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones
came together, bone to its bone. 8I looked,
and there were sinews on them, and flesh
had come upon them, and skin had cov-
ered them, but there was no breath in
them. 9Then he said to me, "Prophesy to
the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the
breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from
the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon
these slain, that they may live." 10I prophe-
sied as he commanded me, and the breath
came into them, and they lived and stood
on their feet, a vast multitude.

11Then he said to me, "Mortal, these
bones are the whole house of Israel. They
say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope
is lost; we are cut off completely.' 12Therefore
prophesy and say to them: 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. 13And you shall know that I am the
LORD when I open your graves and bring
you up from your graves, O my people. 14I
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."

Psalm

Psalm 130; refrain, Ps. 130:5



I wait for you, O LORD; in your word is my hope.

Out | of the depths
I cry to | you, O LORD;
2 **O LORD, | hear my voice!**
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my | supplication.
3 If you were to keep watch | over sins,
O LORD, | who could stand?
4 **Yet with you | is forgiveness,**
in order that you | may be feared. ℟
5 I wait for you, O LORD; | my soul waits;
in your word | is my hope.
6 **My soul waits for the Lord**
more than those who keep watch | for the morning,
more than those who keep watch | for the morning.
7 O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is | steadfast love;
with the LORD there is plen- | teous redemption.
8 **For the LORD shall | redeem Israel**
from | all their sins. ℟

Second Reading

Romans 8:6-11

For Paul, Christian spirituality entails living in the reality of the Holy Spirit. The driving force behind our actions and values is not our sinful desire for self-satisfaction but the very Spirit by which God raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise us from the dead.

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to
set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.
7 For this reason the mind that is set on the
flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to
God's law—indeed, it cannot, 8 and those
who are in the flesh cannot please God.
9 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. 10 But if
Christ is in you, then the body is dead be-
cause of sin, but the Spirit is life because
of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who
raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he
who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will
give life to your mortal bodies also through
his Spirit that dwells in you.

Jesus is moved to sorrow when his friend Lazarus falls ill and dies. Then, in a dramatic scene, he calls his friend out of the tomb and restores him to life.

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, "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 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, howev-
er, 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, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us
also go, that we may die with him."

[17]When Jesus arrived, he found that
Lazarus had already been in the tomb four
days. [18]Now Bethany was near Jerusalem,
some two miles 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.
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, the Son of God,
the one coming into the world."

[28]When she had said this, she went back
and called her sister Mary and told her pri-
vately, "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?"

[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."

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

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church. Grant life and peace to all who gather in your name. Breathe into us so that we may share your message of forgiveness, hope, and love. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We pray for creation. Renew landscapes that have dried up, prosper the work of those who restore homes and habitats after natural disasters, and sustain places where biodiversity thrives (*local places in nature may be named*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We pray for the nations. Unbind leaders trapped by fear to act boldly for justice, free all who live in places of war and violence, and guide refugees and asylum seekers to safety. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We pray for all people in need. Take away the stone of poverty that weighs down so many. Console any who weep and heal all who are sick (*especially*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

We pray for this assembly. Ready the hearts and spirits of all preparing to be baptized (*especially*). Deepen our wonder at the mystery of your resurrection and life. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We offer our thanksgiving for (*Jonathan Edwards and*) all people who have died in faith. Give us faith to trust in your power to redeem and save, and bring us up from our graves to life in you. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 143. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, died 1980) 2 Kings 4:18-37. **Wednesday** (Annunciation of Our Lord) Luke 1:26-38. **Thursday** Psalm 31:9-16. **Friday** Philippians 1:21-30. **Saturday** Mark 10:32-34. **Passion/Palm Sunday** (commemoration of Hans Nielsen Hauge, renewer of the church, died 1824) Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14—27:66 *or* Matthew 27:11-54.

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