

As we enter this final week before Holy Week the narrative of Jesus' life on earth builds to a climax. In the Gospels of the last two weeks, Jesus gave water to those who thirsted and light to those who could not see. Water and light are essentials of life. Today we hear Jesus giving life itself to someone who has died. The giver of water and light is also the giver of life itself. Let us thank God for the gift of our Savior as we prepare for the final two weeks of Lent.

As we gather together let us begin our service by professing what we believe.

Profession of Faith: Page 20

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, (bow as we say) and by the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Introductory Rite:

Greeting:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God for ever.

Blessed be God for ever.

Penitential Rite:

My brothers and sisters, to prepare ourselves for this celebration, let us call to mind our sins.

Lord Jesus, resurrection and life, you raised Lazarus from the dead: Lord, have mercy **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, resurrection and life, you are the Messiah, the Son of God: Christ, have mercy **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, resurrection and life, you are the way that leads to everlasting life: Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

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.**

Liturgy of the Word:

First Reading Page 86

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Thus saying 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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm Page 88

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

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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/.**

If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, / Lord, who can stand?
 But with you is forgiveness, / that you may be revered. **R/.**

I trust in the Lord; / my soul trusts in his work.
 More than sentinels wait for the dawn, / let Israel wait for the Lord. **R/.**

For with the Lord is kindness / and with him is plenteous redemption;
 and he will redeem Israel / from all their iniquities. **R/.**

Second Reading Page 88

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.Gospel Page 90

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

*John 11:1-45***Glory to you, O Lord**

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 work 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 the, said, “Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that his 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection on the Word:

In his Gospel, John emphasizes that God is made manifest in even the most difficult and tragic circumstances. Over the last two Sundays, we have heard Jesus emphatically tell his disciples that neither disability nor death are obstacles to God’s life-giving touch. In that era, blindness was thought to be the result of sin. The only question was whether it was his own or his parents’. No, says Jesus, “it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him” (John 9:3). After Lazarus’s sudden death, some of the townspeople all but accuse Jesus of failing to do something to prevent it. But Jesus had said that the illness and death “is for the glory of God” (John 11:4). Just as blindness was not the end for the man who came to believe in Jesus, death was not the end for Lazarus. Jesus made the divine manifest to both.

In this world nothing is more powerful than death. It cannot be undone. It happens to everything and everyone who lives. Whether plant or animal, baby or elder, it is absolute and it is final. In this world. But all three readings assert God’s ultimate power over it. God will open our graves and have us rise from them. God will give life to our mortal bodies. God will bring us forth from the tomb. If God has this kind of power, how can any evil in this world conquer us? With the Spirit dwelling in us, even death is overcome.

Some of us may have had an experience that felt like being released from a tomb. Perhaps it was a tomb of alcoholism or addiction. Perhaps it was a tomb of despair or hopelessness. Perhaps in our tomb we felt as if death were the only answer. There is no better person to help those still buried in those tombs than someone who knows the way out. Heed Jesus’ words and work to remove the stones and bands of those still buried.

Question - How can I free myself from the burial bands in my life? How can I help others release their own?

Prayer of the Faithful:

We believe that God always hears us, and so we have the confidence to express our needs and the needs of the world and believe that we will be heard.

- For the Church, that in proclaiming God as the source of life within us we may recognize the sanctity of life within us all, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- That leaders of the world may grow in wisdom and good judgment as they consider and discuss ways to care for the planet and all the people on it, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For those who have committed terrible crimes, that they may be aware of God's promise of redemption and respond with remorse and repentance, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**
- For the elect who are preparing for their initiation at the Easter Vigil, that the coming of the Holy Spirit into their lives may lead them to see the world around them through the eyes of faith, let us pray to the Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.
- For all of us, that we may roll away the stones that block us from becoming closer to God and assist others in unwrapping the burial bands that hold them in bondage, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For what else should we pray? _____ let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

- For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

God of life, you are the source and the destiny of our lives. Kindle your Spirit within us and hear the prayers we offer through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Communion RiteThe Lord's Prayer: Page 152

Let us pray with confidence to the Father in the words our Savior gave us.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Rite of Peace:

The sign of peace outwardly expresses a deep spiritual reality; through this sign we acknowledge Christ's presence in each other and share the peace we have received from Him. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion:

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

Prayer after Communion:

We pray, almighty God, that we may always be counted among the members of Christ, in whose Body and Blood we have communion.

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Concluding Rite:

Final Blessing:

May the Lord bless us,  protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Go in the peace of Christ! **Thanks be to God.**