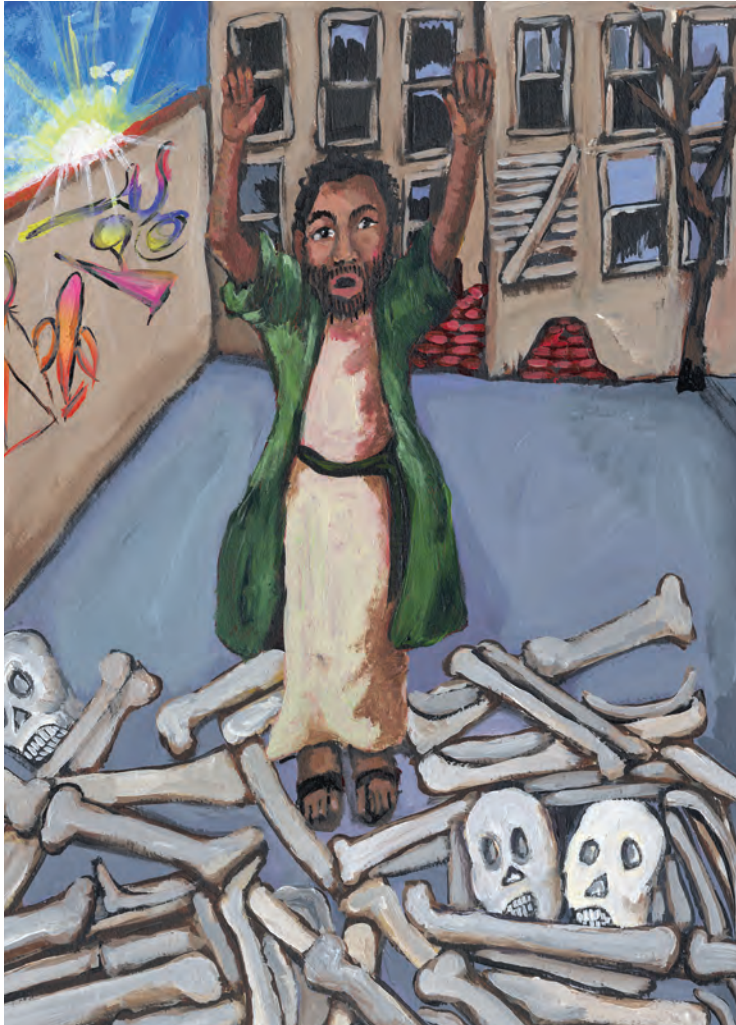


FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT



Release Us by Your Spirit

God of all life,
who raised Lazarus from the dead,
and released the poor from their suffering;
you who lead us in the land of the living:
bless us and give us your Spirit,
your Spirit of generosity and holiness,
of life and of creative energy.
Lift us from our graves of sinfulness
and raise us from our dry and
wasteful ways.
May our sins be left behind
and our life in your Spirit bring us joy.
We ask this through Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

April 2, 2017

Spirit Dwelling Within



Today's Readings: Ezekiel 37:12–14; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7–8; Romans 8:8–11; John 11:1–45. The Spirit of God gives life. The Spirit, given by God, is all about life. Today's readings emphasize the role of the Spirit in those apparently dead. Ezekiel emphasizes this quite vividly: graves will be opened and we will rise from them. That is only the beginning, though. God will settle us in our land by putting his Spirit within us.

Have you already died, buried in a grave of apathy or disillusionment or sinfulness? Have you allowed a negative attitude or an overly judgmental nature to cut you off from God? If so, you have dug your own grave. If the Spirit of God is within you, now is the time to release that Spirit, for it is the spirit of life. The First Reading reminds us that God's Spirit is in us that we might live; and we are not just to live, but live and "settle" in the land of the living.

We who have been baptized carry within us the Spirit of Christ, as St. Paul reminds us in the Second Reading, and therefore have life—Christ's life—dwelling in us. That is not just a calling, but a reminder that we are sustained by our baptismal graces throughout our ups and downs, our joys and our failings. We do not need to remain in the graves we have dug. We must settle in the land of the living.

Belief in Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life is at the heart of today's Gospel passage about the raising of Lazarus. In the dialogue between Jesus and Martha, Jesus states clearly, "Whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live." Martha, Mary, and Lazarus had lived the life of the Spirit of God. They not only believed that Jesus was the Messiah, they lived that daily. Jesus' raising Lazarus from the dead, then, is an affirmation that the grave had no power over a life lived in the Spirit.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, April 3

In the Dark Valley I Fear No Evil

Today, both readings from the Old and New Testaments speak to ancient punishments for women, but they also speak of Daniel and Jesus going beyond first-glance assumptions, and finding justice that is built on faith and truth, not first impressions. If anything, we often need to look two, three, four, or more times at people and situations before deciding where God is in the experience or relationship. *Today's Readings: Daniel 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62; Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6; John 8:1–11.*

Tuesday, April 4

St. Isidore of Seville

Isidore was from a family that had many bishops. He was known for his vast knowledge and his use of that knowledge to guide the priests under his charge in Seville, Spain, in the early seventh century. He wrote the first complete compilation of knowledge, and is now patron of the Internet. His gift was the ability to use what he knew to guide laity and clergy alike in how they were to live their faith devoutly. *Today's Readings: Numbers 21:4–9; Psalm 102:2–3, 16–18, 19–21; John 8:21–30.*

Wednesday, April 5

St. Vincent Ferrer, Priest

A Dominican priest, Vincent Ferrer was a gifted preacher. Living in the late fourteenth century, he was caught up in the Great Schism of the Church, a time when disagreements were so volatile that more than one pope reigned at the same time. St. Vincent, however, preached Christ, and evangelized throughout Europe, drawing people to the faith through the Paschal Mystery and not politics. *Today's Readings: Daniel 3:14–20, 91–92, 95; Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; John 8:31–42.*

Thursday, April 6

Abraham's Covenant

The use of the word covenant in today's readings might seem ancient and impractical to some. Yet our Baptism is a type of covenant. Each year during Easter Time, we renew our baptismal promises, saying I do to our commitment to a life of faith to which we continually strive. During this Lent, take to time prepare for that renewal, thinking of the place of that covenant in your life. *Today's Readings: Genesis 17:3–9; Psalm 105:4–5, 6–7, 8–9; John 8:51–59.*

Friday, April 7

St. John Baptist de la Salle, Priest

Known for his tireless work educating the poor, St. John Baptist de la Salle built schools. He founded the Christian Brothers and the first school to train future teachers. He called his work an outpouring from God, who “guides all things with wisdom and serenity.” He died on Good Friday 1719, in his native France. *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 20:10–13; Psalm 18:2–3a, 3bc–4, 5–6, 7; John 10:31–42.*

Saturday, April 8

I Will Be Their God

If we are not careful, the unity expressed in today's readings can elude us. The unity is of “the dispersed,” of a land previously divided into two kingdoms. How do we work for unity among the wide diversity of peoples, neighborhoods, and faiths that we know? As we approach Holy Week, let us focus on the Cross as our symbol of unity among peoples, as well as between earth and heaven. *Today's Readings: Ezekiel 37:21–28; Jeremiah 31:10, 11–12abcd, 13; John 11:45–56.*

