

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR A

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

God, who made us
and gives us life,
your Son, Jesus,
came among us
to raise the dead
from their graves and give us
all a life that will never end.
We love you for this
and pray to you
that we will have that life,
and so live with you, and Jesus,
and the Holy Spirit,
forever and ever.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Our readings today focus on resurrection to new life. The reading from *Ezekiel* speaks to new life on two levels. The people will experience new life when they have been brought home to Israel after their exile. But the reading also speaks of God opening graves and raising those inside to life. Both of these will reveal the person and power of God. Although this passage does not refer to individual resurrection, it is one of the early hints in the Old Testament of a belief that there is life after death. This belief, inconsistent in the Old Testament, is more developed in its later books.

Our Gospel also reveals the person and power of God. The significance of the story is in the apparent irreversibility of the situation. Martha has already expressed a belief in a general resurrection at the end of time. But Lazarus had been dead four days. At Jesus' word, Lazarus is raised to life and "many of the people. . . believed in him."

*"I am the resurrection. I am life."
Jesus gives us life.*

FIRST READING: *Ezekiel 37:12-14*

This is a reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

This is what God says,

"O my people, I am going to open your graves
and raise you from death.

I am going to bring you home to Israel.

Then you will know that you are my people,
and I am your God.

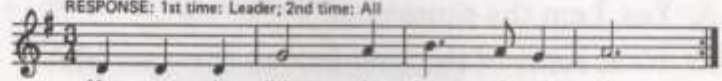
And I will put my Spirit in you so you will live.

Then you will know that I, your God,
will do what I said I would do."

The Word of the Lord.

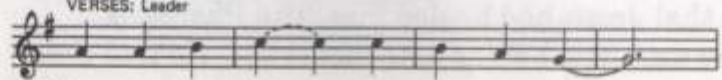
RESPONSE: *Psalm 36*

RESPONSE: 1st time: Leader; 2nd time: All



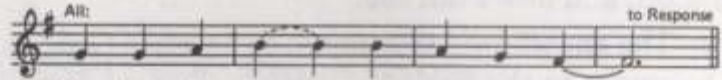
You are the light, the fountain of life.

VERSES: Leader



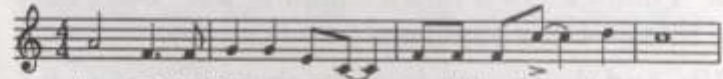
1. Your love is true and sets us free.
2. You give us water that lets us live.

All: to Response




1. Your love is true and sets us free.
2. You give us water that lets us live.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:



"I am the Resurrection, you will have life in me.



I am the Resurrection, you will have life in me."

After Gospel, repeat Acclamation

GOSPEL: *John 11:1-45*

This is a reading from the Gospel of John.

Martha, Mary, and their brother, Lazarus,
lived in the village of Bethany. They were friends of Jesus.
So when Lazarus was very sick, his two sisters
sent a message to Jesus saying,

"Lord, your friend, Lazarus, is very sick."

Jesus was with the disciples when he got this message,
and he said to them,

"This sickness is not going to end in death.

No, this has happened to Lazarus
so that you will believe in me."

Jesus loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus very much,
yet he stayed where he was for two more days.

Then he said to his disciples,

"Now, let's go to Bethany."

By the time Jesus got there, Lazarus was already dead and
had been buried in a tomb for four days. Martha said to Jesus,

"Lord, if you had been here before,
my brother would not have died."

Jesus said to Martha,

"Your brother will rise again."

Martha said,

"Yes, I know he will rise again at the end of time
in the resurrection of all people."

Jesus said to Martha,

"I am the resurrection. I am life.
Anyone who believes in me will live forever.
Even though they die, they will live forever.
Do you believe this?"

Martha answered,

"Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Christ."

Then Martha went to get her sister, Mary. She said,

"Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her crying, he was filled with pity,
and he began to cry. When the others saw Jesus crying,
they said,

"See how much he loved Lazarus."

Then Jesus asked,

"Where is Lazarus buried?"

They said,

"Come and see."

Lazarus was buried in a cave, and there was a large stone in
front of it. When Jesus came to the tomb,
his heart was again filled with pity, and he said,

"Roll the stone away from the cave."

So they took the stone away.

Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said,

"Father, I thank you for hearing my prayers.
I know that you always hear me,
but I am praying especially now
so that these people will believe that you sent me."

Then he shouted,

"Lazarus, come out of the tomb!"

Lazarus came out. His hands and feet and face
were wrapped in pieces of white cloth. So Jesus said,

"Untie him, and let him go."

Many of the people who came to be
with Martha and Mary were Jews.

And when they saw what Jesus did, they believed in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Ask the children what the Gospel said to them. Invite the children to imagine the characters. Martha and Mary and Lazarus were good friends of Jesus. He went to their home for dinner and to visit (*Luke 10:38*). The two sisters sent a message to Jesus that his friend, Lazarus, was sick.

When Jesus arrived, Lazarus was already dead. How do you think Martha felt when she saw Jesus coming? What did she say? How did Jesus answer her?

Lead the children in a recollection of the dialogue between Jesus and Martha, and Jesus and Mary.

Remind the children that Jesus was filled with pity when he saw how sad Martha and Mary were, and he cried. It is important that the children see the humanity of Jesus.

What did Jesus do before he called Lazarus out of the tomb?

The significance of the story rests on the seemingly impossible task ahead of Jesus. It is on the basis of his power that "many who came to be with Martha and Mary. . . believed in him."

Jesus can do all things.

*Jesus will raise us up after we die.
He asks us, as he asked Martha and Mary, to believe that even now.*

