

and whoever lives and believes in me  
will never die.

Do you believe this?

'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'

Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.

I knew indeed that you always hear me.

But I speak

for the sake of all these who stand round me,

so that they may believe it was you who sent me.'

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

#### ■ The Gospel of the Lord.

*Longer form, 11:1-45*

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# Reflections on the Gospel

## ETERNAL LIFE

In today's Gospel, Jesus leaves what is for him safe country across the Jordan to go to Judea. He puts his own life at mortal risk in order to give life to his mortally ill friend.

Strangely, of course, Jesus, on hearing the news of Lazarus' grave illness, delays a few days before acting on the sisters' message. In effect, he allows Lazarus to die. This means that he can enter into and address the grief of Martha and Mary, and of all those who subsequently mourn the death of loved ones.

Martha takes comfort in her conventional belief in the resurrection of the dead on the last day. But Jesus majestically proclaims, 'I am the resurrection and the life'. For those who believe, 'eternal life' begins now; it transcends the barrier of death.

Jesus in the end restores Lazarus to this present life. But, beyond a kindness to Lazarus and his sisters, this miracle is more importantly a sign and symbol that, in the sense mentioned above, Jesus is 'the resurrection and the life' for all believe.

What Jesus does for Lazarus in fact plays out in miniature the whole pattern of his life and mission. As incarnate Son of God, he leaves the 'safe country' of his eternal dwelling with the Father (Jn 1:1-2) to enter our world and, at the cost of his own life, give eternal life to us all. Each one of us, confronted with the prospect of death, is Lazarus, the friend for whom Jesus will give his own life. We should hear the Passion with this in mind.



Brendan Byrne, SJ



# THE SAVING WORD

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT / A

29 MARCH 2020

## FIRST READING

Ezek 37:12-14

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel**

*I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live.*

The Lord says this: I am now going to open your graves; I mean to raise you from your graves, my people, and lead you back to the soil of Israel. And you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people. And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live, and I shall resettle you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this – it is the Lord who speaks.

### ■ The word of the Lord.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 129. R. v. 7

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

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord, / Lord, hear my voice! / O let your ears be attentive / to the voice of my pleading. **R.**
2. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, / Lord, who would survive? / But with you is found forgiveness: / for this we revere you. **R.**
3. My soul is waiting for the Lord, / I count on his word. / My soul is longing for the Lord / more than watchman for daybreak. / (Let the watchman count on daybreak / and Israel on the Lord.) **R.**
4. Because with the Lord there is mercy / and fullness of redemption, / Israel indeed he will redeem / from all its iniquity. **R.**

## SECOND READING

Rom 8:8-11

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans**

*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he will give life to your own mortal bodies.*

People who are interested only in unspiritual things can never be pleasing to God. Your interests, however, are not in the unspiritual, but in the spiritual, since the Spirit of God has made his home in you. In fact, unless you

possessed the Spirit of Christ you would not belong to him. Though your body may be dead it is because of sin, but if Christ is in you then your spirit is life itself because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

### ■ The word of the Lord.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Jn 11:25, 26

**Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ! / I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; / whoever believes in me will not die for ever. / Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!**

## GOSPEL

Jn 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33-45.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.**

*I am the resurrection and the life.*

The sisters sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill.' On receiving the message, Jesus said, 'This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.'

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea.'

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said:

'I am the resurrection and the life.

If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live,



# The Immaculate Conception Parish, Harvey

Welcomes you to

## Our Lady of Immigrants Catholic Church



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**VISION: TO INCREASE THE ENGAGEMENT/  
PARTICIPATION OF PARISHIONERS IN THE LIFE,  
MINISTRY AND MISSION OF THE PARISH.**

# Fifth Sunday of Lent

Updated directives with regard to Liturgical celebrations:

TO PARISHIONERS OF PARISHES IN THE  
BUNBURY DIOCESE

Dear Brothers and Sisters

### **All churches are to be closed**

Please ensure that all churches and chapels are locked closed until further notice. No one is to be admitted into a church for any reason.

### **Masses and public devotions**

The Sunday Mass obligation is suspended for everyone but priests at present - so no one should feel guilty about missing Mass while the coronavirus remains in the community.

### **No public Masses**

There are to be **no public Masses** or public devotions until further notice. This will be a real hardship for many Catholics, I know, but there is no other option at present.

However, the Lord is still with us and we can still pray parts of the Mass in our homes.

### **Cathedral streaming**

There will be Mass streamed from the cathedral each Sunday when we cannot celebrate public Masses. The cathedral Mass will also be available on YouTube.

### **Spiritual offering**

Like many areas of the world where Catholics are deprived of weekly Mass because of persecution or a shortage of priests, We can

- Repent of our sins by praying the Penitential Act
- Pray for our personal intentions before the Collect Prayer
- Reflect prayerfully on the scripture readings, asking the Lord to see how they relate to our personal lives and situations
- Unite ourselves with the Lord by offering our own lives and crosses as we pray the words of the Preface and Eucharistic Prayer
- Pray a spiritual Communion Prayer, such as

### **My Jesus,**

**I believe that you are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.**

**Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.**

**I embrace you as if You were already there.**

**And unite myself wholly to you. Never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.**

Mass readings and reflections on the scriptures can be found also on numerous websites.

Some Parishes will be streaming Masses also.

### **Home prayer and devotions**

Those less familiar with technology can use the time they normally participate in the parish Mass to pray devotions. The decades of the Rosary is a common example. We could pray the four mysteries – the Joyful, Light, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries of the Rosary.

The main thing is to give time to the Lord as best we can.

### **Priests, Deacons and Consecrated Religious**

Priests will continue to celebrate private Masses on their own. I ask them to offer Masses periodically for the sick; those working hard to protect the community; those caring for the sick; for the protection of the community from the further spread of the virus.

I ask Priests, Deacons and Consecrated Religious to include these intentions when they pray the **Prayer of the Church** each day.

### **The celebration of Baptism**

Celebrations of Baptism should be postponed until further notice – **except** where there is danger of death.

### **The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation**

This Sacrament will not be available inside churches or other buildings until further notice – either the First, Second or Third forms.

Parishioners should make sincere examinations of their consciences and pray an Act of Contrition from their hearts.

If individuals feel still that they need to go to confession for reasons other than personal devotion, Priests should agree if requested **only** if the conditions for hygiene can be strictly followed **outside** a church or other building. Under no circumstances should Confessions outside buildings be advertised: they should be ad hoc and only upon specific request.

All Catholics are dispensed of their annual duty in relation to this Sacrament.

### **Conclusion**

It is sad that we have come to this situation in Australia. However, we must do everything in our power to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Let us all pray that the Lord, who always brings good out of evil, will help us to see also what we can do for the good of others.

We can pray for all, but especially for those for whom this will be a time of reassessment of their lives and values and an opportunity to return to God.

God bless you all, Bishop Gerard

For any other related matters,  
please call Father Jess.