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5th Sunday of Lent - 26 March 2023

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26 March 2023

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Pastoral Note:
Fifth Sunday of Lent – Third Scrutiny

Vincent Glynn

The third Scrutiny is celebrated after the homily in which the celebrant is encouraged to explain the meaning of the scrutiny in the light of the Lenten liturgy and in particular, to encourage the elect that through the prayer of exorcism ‘their spirit is filled with Christ the Redeemer, who is the resurrection and the life’ as found in the gospel account of Lazarus proclaimed on this Sunday (RCIA 130).

During this Fifth Week of Lent the elect are presented with the Lord’s Prayer. The presentation takes place within a Mass celebrated in the presence of a community of faithful (RCIA 165).

Introduction

Water. Light. Life. As we continue to journey with our elect, this Sunday, we read the third of the three great gospels of the Scrutinies – the story of Lazarus: story not of death, but of God’s glory. Lord, we believe that you are the Christ!

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life. Lord have mercy.

You teach us to believe in you. Christ have mercy.

You raise us to life in the Spirit. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The Oration

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, God, for ever and ever.

With the rites for holy week and the celebration of the Triduum drawing near, this collect from the ancient Spanish liturgy invites the faithful to contemplate the self-emptying of Jesus. The theological heart of the prayer is the struggle between death and love. The divine Son challenges the power of death. In this oration 'death' is the result of sin at all levels of life and society. The Christ allows sin and evil to have its way: he suffers abandonment by his leaders, his priests, his people, his friends and is killed by the colonial overmasters. His 'world' betrays him. Yet his love encompasses all reality, the totality of all 'worlds'. It is love that motivates Jesus' willingness to be subject to the forces of death. The prayer's petition is equally confronting. We seek from God to have the same quality and depth of love. We do not seek it begrudgingly, but eagerly. his is an active charity: we 'walk' in the self-same love of Christ. As we journey, we desire to travel as Christ, effectively countering 'death' where we meet it.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Ezekiel 37:12-14

In this vision of Ezekiel, we learn that God brings life out of death. With God's spirit breathed into us once more, we are brought home to our own place.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 129(130)

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

While this sixth penitential psalm is the lament of an individual in the depths of their deepest suffering, it is also a confession of faith in the fullness of mercy and redemption to be found in God.

Second Reading

Romans 8:8-11

Today's Second Reading is a Pauline reflection on where life is to be found. Life is to be found, not in the Law, but in the Spirit. While sin brings death, the Spirit of God living in us brings life to us.

Gospel Reading

John 11:1-45 or John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45

John presents the raising of Lazarus as the last of the 'signs' given by Jesus and indeed the defining act of his public ministry. This Gospel reading reminds us that the story of Lazarus, the story of Jesus, our story ends never in death, but in God's glory.

Reflection

At first glance, Today's first reading seems disturbing. Almost ghoulish. About how the Lord is going to open graves. And how the Lord is going to raise people from their graves. This is surely the stuff of horror movies. Isn't it?

But if we reread the text of this reading carefully, we find something very different. To the people of Israel and Judah, to be in Exile in Babylon was as good as being dead. For to be taken away from your homeland and made prisoner in a foreign land was as bad as being in a grave. With no life inside of them.

Our reading today is actually full of rich images of homecoming. Ezekiel is the great prophet of the Exile. A priest, Ezekiel was taken into Exile in Babylon along with the other leaders of Judah. And while in Exile in Babylon, a long way from home, Ezekiel prophesies about the great things the Lord will do. How the Lord will bring his people home. And this homecoming will be like rising from the dead.

When the Lord will bring his people home, their graves of Exile will be opened up. The Lord will give them new life, placing his Spirit in them, and bring them home to their own land, to their own soil. And the Lord will thus breathe life into his people once more.

And by these wonderful and mighty acts, the Lord will make himself known: 'You will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, my people' says the Lord. This, says the Lord, is the sign by which you will know me.

In today's Gospel Reading, Jesus shows us another sign. This sign is the raising of Lazarus from the dead. For John's Gospel, Jesus' miracles are signs. More than just some physical action, these signs point to a deeper reality, there is always an underlying significance. For while these signs glorify the Father, they also give us a true indication of the real identity of the one who works these signs. And they do this in order that our faith may be enkindled, deepened, strengthened.

This sign of raising Lazarus from the dead marks a turning point in our reading of John's Gospel. Last week's healing of the man-born-blind turned the Jews against Jesus. This week, their mind is made up. After Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead, the authorities meet and decide that this Jesus must go. And indeed, if we were to read on a little further in John's Gospel today, we would read the account of the secret meeting which took place where the Jewish leaders decide on the death of Jesus. Lazarus is raised to life: Jesus is condemned to death. This sign of raising Lazarus from the dead is a 'sign of contradiction.' A miracle of life that will lead to a tragedy of death. But we know and we believe that Jesus is truly the Resurrection and the Life. So, we know that this sign of contradiction is itself contradicted. That death is not the final word for Jesus. That his death, like the death of Lazarus, will in fact not end with death, but rather in God's glory.

We who hear this Gospel today, we ourselves are called to be signs of contradiction, too. For like the people of Judah who heard the prophecy of Ezekiel, we are resettled on our own soil. Our graves are open, we are alive again. For, the Lord has put his Spirit in us. Indeed, as St Paul reminded the Romans, the Spirit of the Lord has

made his home with us and lives within us. Like Lazarus, Jesus has called us out of death and into new life.

This is the message that we are called to be in our world and for our world. And this message is something our world is crying out to hear. That death is not the answer. Death does not have the final word to say to our world. In our world that so often preaches the very different message of death and destruction and the absence of God's love, this is the sign of contradiction.

The sign of contradiction is that Christ who suffered and died is indeed the resurrection and the life. We who believe in him will never die.



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

During this season of penance and preparation, let us open our hearts and minds to the teaching of Jesus and offer our needs to his Father.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and Church leaders that their teaching and guidance lead us out of darkness and into renewal through the Holy Spirit, particularly during this journey towards the Synod.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders of nations, in times of turmoil and unrest, that their hearts will be opened to the words and deeds of Jesus.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those grieving the loss of a loved one, give them strength and hope during this time of remembrance and prayer and may they be comforted.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those afflicted with illness, may the care and compassion that they receive from family and friends open their hearts in gratitude.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those whose faith is challenged by doubt and fear, may they find light and overcome their uncertainty in the promises offered by Jesus Christ through the witness of Christians around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

We heard in the gospel that Jesus said: 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.' We know that you hear our prayers and we wait in confidence as we celebrate the coming of your Kingdom. We ask this prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year A (26 March 2023)

Title	AOV1	CWB	CWBII	GA
All that is hidden	127			
Bring us back to you, O Lord our God		629	287	
Eye has not seen	146			466
From ashes to the living font			289	
Grant to us, O Lord		698	291	303
I am the bread of life	49	718	509	204
O sacred head, surrounded		776	330	335
Take up your cross			612	
Tree of life			300	307
Unless a grain of wheat	35		635	500
When I survey the wondrous cross		862	329	330

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
I am the bread of life		153	
Jesus, bread of life	80		
With the Lord		86	
With the Lord there is mercy (Modlin)			280
With the Lord there is mercy (McDonell)			281

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 129: *With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.*

	CWB	GA	JOBA	LPA	PM
Psalm 129	204	77	pg. 36	pg. 39	pg. 100

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Be with us (FWS) *Based on Ps 90/91* [Gathering, Gifts]

Create a new heart (FWS) *Based on Ps 50/51* [Gathering, Gifts, Recessional]

This is the time (TT) [Gathering, Recessional]

Lenten acclamation (TT) [Gospel Acclamation]

Lenten gospel acclamation – Mass Jubilee (MJC) [Gospel Acclamation]

Turn back to God (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]