



FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 37:1-14

A reading from Ezekiel.

¹The hand of the LORD came upon me,
and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD
and set me down in the middle of a valley;
it was full of bones.

²He led me all around them;
there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.

³He said to me,
“Mortal, can these bones live?”
I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.”

⁴Then he said to me,
“Prophesy to these bones, and say to them:
O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones:
I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.

⁶I will lay sinews on you,
and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin,
and put breath in you, and you shall live;
and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

⁷So I prophesied as I had been commanded;
and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling,
and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

⁸I looked, and there were sinews on them,
and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them;
but there was no breath in them.

⁹Then he said to me,
“Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:
Thus says the Lord GOD:
Come from the four winds, O breath,
and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.”

¹⁰I prophesied as he commanded me,
and the breath came into them,
and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. ▶

FIRST READING *Ezekiel = eh-ZEE-kee-el prophesy = PROF-uh-sigh*

This dramatic vision of the prophet requires a double portion of energy and enthusiasm for the telling of the story. Before the reader can help us to imagine a valley full of bones, the reader must visualize such a frightening sight. Then share the vision with us with a sense of mystery, wonder, and power. Note carefully that prophesy is a verb, pronounced as shown above.

¹¹Then he said to me,
“Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel.
They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost;
we are cut off completely.’

¹²Therefore prophesy, and say to them,

Thus says the Lord GOD:

I am going to open your graves,
and bring you up from your graves, O my people;
and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves,
and bring you up from your graves, O my people.

¹⁴I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live,
and I will place you on your own soil;
then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act,”
says the LORD.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 130

SECOND READING: Romans 8:6-11

A reading from Romans.

⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death,
but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God;
it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot,

⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But you are not in the flesh;
you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you.
Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin,
the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,
he who raised Christ from the dead
will give life to your mortal bodies also
through his Spirit that dwells in you.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

SECOND READING

The reader may be helped in connecting this reading with the first reading to know that in Hebrew the word for breath and the word for spirit are the same. If one recalls the text in Genesis (2:7) that “God . . . breathed [into the form made from the dust of the ground] . . . and the man became a living being,” one can perhaps more readily understand the point the author of Romans is making—that it is the breath/spirit of God that gives life to us.

GOSPEL: John 11:1-45

The holy gospel according to John.

¹Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany,
the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume
and wiped his feet with her hair;
her brother Lazarus was ill.

³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,
“Lord, he whom you love is ill.”

⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said,
“This illness does not lead to death;
rather it is for God’s glory,
so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,
⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill,
he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷Then after this he said to the disciples,
“Let us go to Judea again.”

⁸The disciples said to him,
“Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you,
and are you going there again?”

⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight?
Those who walk during the day do not stumble,
because they see the light of this world.

¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble,
because the light is not in them.”

¹¹After saying this, he told them,
“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep,
but I am going there to awaken him.”

¹²The disciples said to him,
“Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.”

¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death,
but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep.

¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.

¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.
But let us go to him.” ▶

GOSPEL *Lazarus = LAZ-uh-rus*

A significant part of the challenge of this reading is its length. Avoid the temptation to rush through it. The assembly has gathered specifically to hear the gospel. Delight in every detail. Allow the drama time to unfold.

¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples,
“Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

¹⁷When Jesus arrived,
he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away,

¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary
to console them about their brother.

²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,
she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

²¹Martha said to Jesus,

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

²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.”

²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴Martha said to him,

“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

²⁵Jesus said to her,

“I am the resurrection and the life.

Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,

²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this?”

²⁷She said to him,

“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,
the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

²⁸When she had said this,

she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately,

“The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”

²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.

³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village,

but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

³¹The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her,

saw Mary get up quickly and go out.

They followed her

because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him,

she knelt at his feet and said to him,

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

³³When Jesus saw her weeping,
and the Jews who came with her also weeping,
he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

³⁴He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

³⁵Jesus began to weep.

³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

³⁷But some of them said,

"Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man
have kept this man from dying?"

³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb.

It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him,

"Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days."

⁴⁰Jesus said to her,

"Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

⁴¹So they took away the stone.

And Jesus looked upward and said,

"Father, I thank you for having heard me.

⁴²I knew that you always hear me,

but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here,

so that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³When he had said this,

he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

⁴⁴The dead man came out,

his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth,

and his face wrapped in a cloth.

Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore,

who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did,

believed in him.

The gospel of the Lord.