

## Fifth Sunday of Lent, March 26, 2023

### Our Lady of Perpetual Help

#### First Reading — Ezekiel 37:12-14

12Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. 13And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it, says the LORD."

#### Responsorial Psalm PS 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8.

**R. (7) With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; LORD, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to my voice in supplication.

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

If you, O LORD, mark iniquities, LORD, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered.

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

I trust in the LORD; my soul trusts in his word. More than sentinels wait for the dawn, let Israel wait for the LORD.

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

For with the LORD is kindness and with him is plenteous redemption; And he will redeem Israel from all their iniquities.

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

#### Second Reading — Romans 8:8-11

...8and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness. 11If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you.

#### Gospel Reading — John 11:1-45

1Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was Mary who anointed the Lord

with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. 3So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." 4But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it." 5Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6So when he heard that he was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. 7Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." 8The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" 9Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any one walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10But if any one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." 11Thus he spoke, and then he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awake him out of sleep." 12The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." 13Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. 14Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; 15and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." 17Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, 19and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary sat in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 23Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" 27She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the

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Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world.” 28When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying quietly, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” 29And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; 34and he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” 35Jesus wept. 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?” 38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” 40 Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” 41So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42I knew that thou hearest me always, but I have said this on account of the people standing by, that they may believe that thou didst send 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 bandages, and his face wrapped with 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 he did, believed in him; ...

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#### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...*

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud**

*As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.*

#### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

“Don’t miss that call!” seems to be the prevailing sentiment of U.S. society these days. Who of us hasn’t had a telephone conversation, even a long-distance call, interrupted because the person with whom we were talking needing to answer a “call waiting” signal. The assumption being that the incoming call may be more important than the current call. We use all kind of devices for people to get through to us and often walk around with a cell phone in our hand so that we don’t miss that all important call. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have a spiritual cell phone so that God could reach us at any time day or night by simply calling our spiritual cell phone number? I wonder how many of us would walk around with the cell phone turned off, or even worse allow God’s call to be interrupted by a seemingly more important “call waiting” signal from our world. In this week’s Gospel reading, we see Martha and Mary being linked by faith to Jesus and his message of resurrection and life. “When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him.” Mary heard Jesus’ call through Martha, “The Master is here and calls for you.” And as soon as she heard that Jesus called for her, “she rose quickly and went to him.” In this fifth week of Lent, do we hear Jesus’ call or are we disconnected? Are we rising in faith to respond to his call or are we distracted by the many cares of our world? Imagine what would have happened, or should we say what would not have happened, if Martha and Mary had not responded in faith to Jesus. What a glorious experience and message they would have missed. Jesus chose to punctuate the message of resurrection and life by raising Lazarus bodily from death. This is the third time Jesus raised someone from the dead, demonstrating each time that he holds the keys to life. But it was in this instance, a precursor of his own death and resurrection, that he chose to clearly articulate the promise of resurrection and life for those who believe. “Thus the human being linked in faith to Christ possesses a life that will outlive death and that already here on earth reaches into eternity. It is as Christ himself once expressed it: ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has life everlasting, and does not come to judgement, but has passed from death to life’ (John 5:24) ... After Golgotha death was never the same. To believe in Jesus Christ means to share in his deathlessness, as he himself said we should: He who believes shall have life everlasting, even in death.”<sup>1</sup> We read the story of Lazarus and marvel, one who was dead for four days had risen alive. But there is a more marvelous truth hidden in this week’s readings. Ezekiel foretells the promise that God will put his Spirit within us and we will live, really live, not just physically but eternally. The indwelling of us by God does not happen after we die but begins here and now. “For every believer regenerated in Christ, no matter in what part of the whole world he may be, breaks with that ancient way of life that derives from original sin, and by rebirth is transformed into a new man [or woman]. Henceforth he is reckoned to be of the stock, not of his earthly father, but of Christ, who became Son of Man precisely that men could become sons of God; for unless in humility he had come down to us, none of us by our merits could ever go up to him. “Therefore, the greatness of the gift which he has bestowed on us demands an appreciation proportioned to its excellence; for blessed Paul the Apostle truly teaches: ‘we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God’ ”<sup>2</sup> How different must have been the lives of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary after this experience. Not simply because Lazarus lived again after being dead for four days, but because they came to experience a life “that already here on earth reaches into eternity.” Martha’s words to Mary echo in our ears, “The Master is here and calls for you.” Jesus still calls to us, offering this resurrection life to us as well. How will you respond?

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**INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

**First Reading —**

1. Which of these promises are most meaningful to you? Why?

**Second Reading —**

2. What does it mean to be “in the flesh” and “in the Spirit”?

**Gospel Reading —**

3. With which of the people in this incident do you most identify?
4. How have you experienced comfort in the loss of a loved one?
5. How would you answer Jesus’ question in verse 26?
6. What is the stone that needs to be rolled away so that you can experience new life?
7. How can we help roll away the stone for others?

**INVITATION TO ACT**

*Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.*

**CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.*