

I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Thus the nations shall know that it is I, the LORD, who make Israel holy, when my sanctuary shall be set up among them forever.

-Ezekiel 37

Fifth Week of Lent: April 10-16, 2011

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The Fifth Week of Lent

The **Fifth Sunday of Lent** brings us closer toward the Passion and death of Jesus. This is the third and final week of [Scrutinies](#) in our parishes for those in the RCIA program. In **John's Gospel**, we hear the story of the raising of Lazarus. Jesus was not there when his dear friend, Lazarus died, but after meeting with Lazarus' grief-stricken sisters and weeping himself, he stood at the door of the tomb and called, "Lazarus, come out! The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, 'Untie him and let him go.'"

The first readings prepare for the gospels. We begin with the long, but wonderful story of Susanna, who trusted in God. The bronze serpent on a pole reminds us of Jesus' saving cross. Three young men refuse to commit idolatry and show us how God protects "the servants who trusted in him." God enters a covenant with Abraham. Despite his persecution, Jeremiah praises God, "For he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!" God promises the people of Israel "a covenant of peace."

Our gospels are again from the **John's Gospel**, also known as the **Fourth Gospel**. On Monday, Jesus is presented with a woman caught in adultery. Reminding us of the bronze serpent and his death, Jesus says, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM." To the children of Abraham and to us Jesus declares, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples and you will know the truth, and the

Daily Prayer This Week

This is the last full week of Lent. We can feel the conflict and struggle developing in the readings. As we read about the drama that surrounded Jesus' last days on earth and reflect upon its meaning, we experience how the drama that is going on in our own hearts is more intense the closer we get to the end of Lent.

The Spirit of the Lord is really trying to help us be more open and more free, to receive the graces our Lord wants to offer us. There is another spirit that is fighting just as hard to distract us, discourage us, and prevent us from being open and attentive to God's gifts. The closer we get to the mystery of our Lord's passion, death, and resurrection for us, the more we can experience struggle. If I experience myself somewhat "at war" with myself, then these are very important days to keep deliberately asking our Lord to help me.

It is also a great time to begin to prepare to renew the baptismal promises at Easter. We can reject the unloving choices we've made, all that is unjust, dishonest, disrespectful and violent. We want to refuse to be mastered by empty promises. Declaring our desire for freedom is a great preparation to receive this great gift. If we are celebrating the Scrutinies with the RCIA candidates and catechumens, this is a wonderful time to pray for them as well, for their protection from the evil one in the last days of their journey.

If we have developed the habit of naming a desire the first thing each morning, and carrying on a conversation with our Lord in

truth will set you free.” “Whoever keeps my word will never see death.... Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM.” They heard what they thought was blasphemy and tried to stone him. Jesus simply told the truth, because, “the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” After the raising of Lazarus, the plans were set to destroy Jesus. The high priest says the prophetic words, “it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish.”

On **Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord** we make our way into **Holy Week**. We read the gospel about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, Paul's invitation to us to imitate Jesus who emptied himself, and the whole **Passion**, this year from **Matthew's Gospel**.

the brief background moments of the day, we are already comfortable with letting the Word or the Season interact with the concrete events of the week. This way of finding intimacy with our Lord, through our daily interaction - even in a very busy life - is so appropriate for the Fifth Week of Lent. We can discover areas that are still resistant to God's grace. We can ask for help to practice new ways of being free, or new ways of loving. We can find ways to make financial sacrifices to give to the poor this week.

Each night this week, we can give thanks. The closer we get to celebrating Holy Week and the events that brought us our salvation, each of us can express our gratitude, realizing this was all for me.

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