

Fifth Sunday of Lent (A) – 22.03.2026

Ezek 37,12-14; Rom 8,8-11; Jn 11,1-45

God Calls to Life

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who calls us from death to life and gathers us into the communion of the Church, be with you all.

INTRODUCTION

I welcome you to our celebration on the Fifth Sunday of Lent. In earlier times, this Sunday was known as Passion Sunday.

Today we come before God as we are: with our questions about life and death, with our fears and hopes, with our guilt and our longing for forgiveness, and with our search for God himself.

Some years ago, a man told me about a moment when his life seemed to come to a complete standstill. He had lost his job, his health was failing, and friendships had fallen away. He said, *“I felt like I was buried alive. Not dead—but trapped.”* What saved him was not a sudden miracle, but a

voice: a friend who called, a community that noticed, a small invitation to begin again. Step by step, life returned.

That is the story of today’s readings.

The people of Israel feel buried in exile. Lazarus lies in the tomb. And we, too, know places in our lives that feel closed, heavy, lifeless.

Today we hear a God who does not accept the tomb as the final word.

A God who says through the prophet: *“I will open your graves.”*

A Christ who stands before death and calls by name: *“Come out!”*

As we begin this Eucharist, let us be honest about the ways we need life again—and about the ways we sometimes bind others with fear, judgment, or indifference. And so we ask for God’s mercy.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus Christ,
you stood beside Martha and Mary in their grief
and you listened to their questions and pain.
When we grow impatient with the weakness of others
and forget how much we ourselves depend on
compassion, we call to you: **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus Christ,
you wept at the tomb of your friend Lazarus.
When suffering becomes routine to us
and the pain of others no longer touches our hearts,
we call to you: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus Christ,
you called Lazarus out of the tomb
and entrusted others with unbinding him.
When our words speak of hope
but our actions fail to set others free,
we call to you: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God of life,
who knows our graves and calls us by name,
have mercy on us.
May he forgive us our sins, free us from all that binds us,
and lead us with renewed hearts toward the joy of Easter.
May he bring us, one day, to the fullness of life everlasting.
Amen.

COLLECT

God of life and hope,
you gather us around your table
and speak your promise into our fragile lives.
Strengthen our trust that you are at work
even when we feel delayed, disappointed, or afraid.
When our faith is weak and our questions are many,
remain close to us. Breathe your Spirit into what feels
lifeless, and lead us from fear into freedom,
through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns....
Amen.

HOMILY: God Calls to Life – From the Tomb to New Beginnings

Let me begin with a story. Some years ago, a friend told me of a time when her young son fell gravely ill. She called immediately to a neighbour, a doctor, someone she trusted with her child's life. But he did not come in time. The child passed away. She said, "I felt abandoned, powerless, as if the world had stopped." And yet, she went on: months later, she found a new way to live, to embrace life fully, appreciating every small heartbeat, every laugh, every shared meal. Life had returned to her—not by erasing grief, but by learning to live with it, to find hope again.

This is what today's Gospel tells us, in the story of Lazarus. Jesus did not rush to Bethany. Lazarus had already died. And yet, through grief, delay, and doubt, God's plan was unfolding. Jesus calls life out of death—not only physically, but spiritually, relationally, and emotionally.

The prophet Ezekiel had spoken of a similar promise centuries earlier. The people of Israel, exiled in Babylon,

felt as though all hope was gone. Their bones were dry; their city and Temple destroyed. Yet God said through Ezekiel: *"I will open your graves and bring you back to your land. I will breathe life into you."* This promise was not just for the Israelites; it is for each of us. From exile, oppression, despair, or the loneliness of life, God calls us back to life, to community, to hope.

Think of Ash Wednesday, when we received ashes on our foreheads. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." A stark reminder of mortality. But today, Lent whispers something more: that death is not the final word. The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us and calls us to life even now.

We see this vividly in the Gospel. Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. His sisters, Martha and Mary, were grieving. Friends and neighbours gathered. And Jesus wept. He did not swoop in and erase sorrow. He entered it. He met grief with compassion. He transformed fear and

despair with presence and love. As Martha confessed,
“Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

I like to think of that moment in Bethany like this: Imagine standing in a dark room, burdened by grief or guilt, and hearing someone call your name. “Come out!” How do you respond? At first, perhaps doubt. Perhaps fear. But the call itself is life. Jesus calls each of us out of tombs we cannot leave on our own: tombs of despair, bitterness, guilt, or isolation. He says, *“Come out!”* And then, as the Gospel shows, He asks others to help: *“Untie him and let him go.”* New life is not a solo journey. It is lived in community, with support, love, and care.

Consider the questions that linger: Lazarus returned from the dead, but what of his life afterward? Did he live differently? The Gospel remains silent. It wants us to ask not about him, but about ourselves: How do we respond to life and death? To loss and grief? To the second chances God gives us, the moments to live more fully, more courageously, more lovingly?

And it is not only the extraordinary moments. Resurrection comes in daily life. It comes when a mother finishes her night shift and prays for her children. When a young man turns from anger to forgiveness. When a parish, weary and shrinking, returns to its mission of service, presence, and care. God calls life from every corner of human limitation.

I remember an elderly philosopher, Odo Marquard, who on his 80th birthday said, *“I hope and trust in a God who, after my death, will not raise me again, but will let me sleep.”* And perhaps he is right; perhaps there is rest after death. But before that rest, life is given to us again and again. Every morning is a resurrection, every act of compassion a small rising from the tomb.

Jesus calls us to recognize that death—physical, spiritual, emotional—is not the end. He calls us to hope, to faith, to action. He calls us to see signs: the feeding of the hungry, the healing of the broken, the forgiveness offered, the companionship shared. These are signs pointing to God’s eternal life. They are invitations to trust, to act, and to love.

And so, as we reflect on Lazarus, on the exiles in Babylon, on the sorrow of lives cut short, and on our own moments of doubt or despair, we hear one invitation above all: *Come out. Live. Hope. Trust.* God's Spirit is active. Jesus, the resurrection and the life, is present. Even when we cannot yet see the future, even when the stone seems immovable, even when grief feels endless, life calls to us.

Let me end with a story. In a small village, a woman lost her only child. She could not sleep; she could not eat; she could not imagine life continuing. One morning, she wandered to the river where she had often played with her child. She sat there silently, waiting, crying. And a neighbour, seeing her despair, simply sat beside her. No words, no judgment. Just presence. After hours, she rose, hesitant but alive. She had come out of her tomb, not by miracle alone, but through love, through shared grief, through God's quiet call in human hearts. And from that day, she found herself noticing life again: the sunlight, the birds, the laughter of neighbours. She began to speak to

others, to care, to live. Resurrection had come—not with fanfare, but gently, quietly, persistently.

Dear friends, God calls us to life today. In every sorrow, every limitation, every fear, and every grave of our hearts, He says: *“Come out. Untie yourself. Live!”* And when we answer, when we step toward Him and toward each other, we see that life—full, eternal, radiant—has already begun. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

To believe means to trust that God is stronger than death and that we do not walk alone.

Together, as a community called to life, let us profess the faith that unites us and gives us hope beyond every tomb.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

God calls us out of every tomb—out of fear, despair, and the heaviness that weighs on our hearts.

As we bring these gifts of bread and wine to the altar, let us

also bring ourselves: our doubts, our grief, our longing for life, and our desire to be renewed.

With open hearts, let us ask God to transform these gifts—and transform us—so that we may rise with Christ and share his life with the world.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

God of new beginnings,
we bring before you bread and wine,
gifts of the earth and work of human hands—
signs of life, nourishment, and hope.

As these gifts are placed on your altar,
we place ourselves there as well:
with our doubts and fears, our grief and longing,
our desire to live more fully.

Transform these offerings
and transform us, so that, nourished by Christ,
we may become signs of life for others.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE OUR FATHER

Jesus called God *Father*
even in the face of suffering and death.
With the trust of children who hope for life,
let us pray the prayer he has given us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the fear that paralyses us
and the despair that locks us in.
Grant peace in our days,
that, supported by your mercy,
we may live in freedom and hope
as we await the fulfilment of your promise
in Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Peace is not born where fear rules
or where differences divide.
Peace grows where people dare to see one another
as gifts rather than threats.

Christ is our peace.

He stands before closed tombs and speaks life.

Let us ask him to give us his peace—
a peace that heals, frees, and unites.

Lord Jesus Christ, give your peace to our hearts and to our world. You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life.

In this broken bread, he gives himself to us
and calls us out of all that binds us.

Happy are we who are called to the supper of the lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

We have received the bread of life.

Christ has entered our darkness
and shared our human fragility.

May his Spirit continue to call us
out of fear into trust,
out of isolation into community,
out of death into life.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

God of mercy and renewal,
we thank you for meeting us at your table
and feeding us with the life of your Son.
Open our eyes to those who still wait to be unbound.
Open our ears to your quiet call in daily life.
Strengthen our hands to serve,
our hearts to hope,
and our lives to witness to your love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

God of life, you promise a future
even when the present feels narrow and heavy.
You walk with us through illness, loss, and uncertainty
and call us forward when hope seems buried.
May you bless us and keep us.
May you call us to life again and again.

And may almighty God bless us,
† the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace.

Listen for the voice that calls you by name.

Live as people who have been raised to new life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God does not remove every stone at once—
but he always calls us out of the tomb.

Monday of the 5th Week of Lent – 23 March 2026

Dan 13:1–9.15–17.19–30.33–62; Jn 8:1–11

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of a school year, a teacher once gave each student a blank sheet of paper and said, *“This page is not your past; it is your future. What matters is what you write on it from today.”* That simple gesture lifted a weight from many young hearts. It reminded them that mistakes, labels, and past failures do not have to define who they will become.

Today’s Word tells us that God does something very similar for us. In the story of Susanna, we see how God’s justice protects the innocent and unmasks false judgment. In the Gospel, we meet Jesus, who stands between a sinner and her accusers, not to deny the truth, but to open a way forward through mercy. In a world that is often quick to judge, to shame, and to condemn, the Lord bends down, writes in the dust, and quietly reminds us that every life is more than its worst moment.

As we begin this Eucharist, we come before God with our unfinished stories, our failures, and our hopes. Let us trust that the God we worship today is not a God who throws stones, but a God who opens new pages, restores dignity, and invites us—again and again—to begin anew.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Trusting in the mercy of God, who does not condemn but calls us to new life, let us acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries. Lord Jesus, you stand with the accused and the forgotten.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you disarm our hearts and teach us compassion. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you invite us to leave our sins behind and begin again. **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, rich in mercy and slow to anger, look upon us with compassion, loosen the stones we hold in our hands, forgive us our sins, and lead us into the freedom of new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Merciful and just God, you do not delight in condemnation but in the conversion of the sinner. Free us from the burden of our past, teach us to judge with humility and love, and give us the courage to begin again, so that, renewed by your mercy, we may walk in the light of your truth. 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. **Amen.**

HOMILY

A few years ago, I heard about a teacher who began the school year by asking her students to write their names on a clean sheet of paper. Then she told them, “This page is not your past. It’s your future. What matters is what you write on it from today on.” Some students looked relieved. Others looked unsure. But all of them sensed that they were being given a chance—a new beginning.

That is very much the space God creates for us in today’s readings. Through Jesus, we discover a God whose love goes beyond all limits, a God who, day by day and minute

by minute, gives us room to change our way of thinking, to recognise our faults, and to begin again. God is not tired of us. He is not keeping score. He keeps opening a door and saying, “You still have a future with me.”

The story of Susanna makes this clear in a dramatic way. When we hear her story, our first reaction may well be, “This is totally unfair.” A woman is falsely accused, publicly shamed, and condemned to death. She has no power, no voice that anyone seems willing to hear. All she can do is cry out to God and place her trust in him. And God does not ignore her. He sends the young Daniel, who dares to question, who refuses to go along with the crowd, and who exposes the lie at the heart of the injustice. Susanna is saved because someone was brave enough to stand up for what was right.

That story is a challenge for us. In a world where people are still wrongly judged, labelled, or condemned—sometimes quietly, sometimes very publicly—we are asked to be like Daniel. We are called to question easy judgments, to resist the flow of condemnation, and to stand

up when we see injustice. And as Christians, we are also called to look at our own hands and ask whether we are holding stones.

The Gospel brings this even closer to home. The woman caught in adultery is dragged before Jesus, surrounded by men who see her only in terms of her worst moment. For them, the case is simple: she is guilty, the law is clear, and condemnation feels justified. But Jesus refuses to play that game. He does not deny her sin, but he also refuses to reduce her to it. His words—“Let the one without sin be the first to throw a stone”—turn the spotlight back onto the accusers. One by one, they walk away, because they recognise the truth: none of them is without sin.

Jesus looks at the woman differently. He sees the whole picture of her life, not just one dark detail. He sees not only her past but also her future. He does not say, “Your sin doesn’t matter,” but he does say, “It does not define you.” “Neither do I condemn you,” he tells her. “Go, and do not sin anymore.” It is a word of forgiveness and a call to something better, a new direction, a fuller life.

That is how the Lord looks at each of us. He knows the full story of our lives—the failures we remember with shame and the hopes we hardly dare to name. He knows our story is unfinished. And instead of condemning us, he offers us what the prophet calls “a future full of hope.” The Lord’s deepest desire is not to shame us, but to free us; not to trap us in our past, but to lead us into life.

I once met a man who had spent years convinced that his worst mistake was the final word on his life. One day, in a quiet moment of prayer, he said it felt as though God was saying to him, “I’m not done with you yet.” That simple sentence changed everything. Like that blank page given to those students, it opened up a future he thought was closed.

Today, Jesus says the same to us. Put the stones down. Trust in God’s mercy. Dare to begin again. Because with God, the last chapter has not yet been written—and it is written in hope.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

With humble hearts, let us bring bread and wine to the altar—signs of our lives as they are—and ask the Lord to transform them, and us, by the power of his merciful love.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God, accept these gifts we place before you. As you once defended the innocent and restored the sinner, let this sacrifice cleanse us from sin, soften our hearts, and shape us into a people of mercy and justice. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you are a God whose justice is never separated from mercy and whose truth is always spoken in love. When your children are wrongly judged or weighed down by guilt, you do not abandon them, but draw near with compassion and faithfulness.

In your Son, Jesus Christ, you revealed a justice that restores rather than destroys. He stood with the innocent who had no voice, and he lifted up the sinner burdened by shame. He refused the easy path of condemnation and opened instead the harder way of conversion, forgiveness, and life.

By his saving death and life-giving resurrection, he has written a new future for humanity, not in stone tablets of accusation, but in hearts renewed by grace. Through him, you call us to lay down our stones of judgment and to become witnesses of your mercy in a broken world.

And so, with angels and archangels, and with all the saints, we proclaim your glory, as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy...

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to pray as children who trust in a Father who always gives us another chance:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, especially from the hardness of heart that leads us to judge, exclude, and condemn. Free us from fear disguised as righteousness and from pride that forgets our own need for mercy.

Grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your compassion, we may be freed from sin and safe from distress, and learn to see one another with the eyes of Christ. As we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you; look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church.

Heal the divisions within our hearts that rob us of your peace, and teach us to let go of resentment, self-righteousness, and fear. As you disarmed the accusers and restored dignity to the broken, so shape your Church into a home of mercy, where truth is spoken with love and justice is guided by compassion.

Graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will. Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb— not because they are without sin, but because they trust in his mercy.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In the silence of our hearts, let us hear again the words of Jesus: *“Neither do I condemn you. Go, and do not sin anymore.”* Nourished by his Body and Blood, may we leave this place lighter, freer, and ready to write the next page of our lives with hope.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Merciful Father, you have fed us with the Bread of Life. May this sacrament heal what is broken within us, free us from the weight of past sin, and strengthen us to walk in newness of life, so that we may bear witness to your mercy in the world. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the God of mercy, who saved the innocent, forgave the sinner, and opened a future of hope for all, bless you and keep you. May he free you from fear and condemnation, strengthen you to choose compassion, and lead you in the way of life.

And may the blessing of almighty God, ✠ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, leaving behind every stone of judgment, and glorify the Lord by lives shaped by mercy.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God is not finished with you yet. Put the stones down, trust in mercy, and dare to begin again.

Tuesday of the 5th Week of Lent – 24 March 2026

Num 21:4–9; Jn 8:21–30

INTRODUCTION

There is a story of two people standing on opposite sides of a river, calling out directions to one another. One asks, “How do I get to where you are?” The other answers, “You’re already there.” They are using the same words, yet they speak from different horizons. Neither is lying—but they are not seeing the world from the same place.

That simple image helps us enter today’s Word of God. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks *from above*, from the heart and mission of the Father. His listeners hear him *from below*, from what is familiar, measurable, and safe. The question they ask—“*Who are you?*”—is the deepest question of all, yet it remains unanswered because they are not yet ready to look beyond their own horizon.

In the first reading, the people in the desert are weary and discouraged. God does not remove their struggle, but he gives them something to look at: the bronze serpent

lifted up, a sign of healing and life. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals that he himself will be lifted up, and that only then will his true identity be fully known.

As we gather today, we are invited to lift our eyes—to turn our gaze from fear, confusion, and discouragement, and to look upon Christ, lifted up for us on the cross and present among us in this Eucharist. He is already looking upon us with love. Let us allow his gaze to heal us and to lead us into the fullness of life he promises.

PENITENTIAL ACT

The Lord Jesus was lifted up so that all who look upon him might have life.

Let us now acknowledge our sins and our resistance to his light, and prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus, you are the One who comes from above, yet walks patiently among us. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you were lifted up on the cross to draw all people to yourself. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you look upon us with mercy and lead us from darkness into light. **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,
who so loved the world that he gave his only Son,
look upon us with mercy, heal what sin has wounded,
and lead us from fear into faith, so that, freed from all that
binds us, we may walk as children of the light
and come at last to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Gracious God, as your Son was lifted up
to bring healing and life to all who look upon him,
grant us persevering faith and humble trust,
that, gazing upon the mystery of the cross,
we may be drawn ever more deeply into your love
and bear witness to your truth in the world.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son... Amen.

HOMILY – Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

There is a story told of two people standing on opposite sides of a river, shouting directions to each other. One calls out, “How do I get to where you are?” The other shouts back, “You’re already there!” Both are speaking honestly—but from completely different sides. They are using the same words, yet living in different worlds.

That image helps us enter today’s Gospel. In Saint John’s Gospel, Jesus and the Pharisees keep talking past one another. John loves to use contrasting pairs—light and darkness, above and below—and today we hear that tension clearly. Jesus speaks “from above,” from the horizon of God’s life and mission. His listeners argue “from below,” from what is familiar, controllable, and earthly. No wonder there is misunderstanding. As Saint-Exupéry once said, *language is the source of many misunderstandings*—especially when people speak from different horizons of the heart.

The Pharisees ask a question that echoes through the centuries: “Who are you?” It is not a foolish question. It is

the question. Yet they cannot hear the answer, even when Jesus uses the most sacred words of all: “*I am.*” Words that once came from the burning bush now stand before them in flesh and blood—and still they do not see. Unbelief leads them to a dead end.

Jesus, however, does not turn away from their resistance. As a Jew among his own people, he faces rejection with courage and love. He keeps speaking. He keeps inviting. And he makes a startling claim: “*When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he.*” In other words, only the cross will fully reveal who he is.

Here the Gospel links beautifully with the first reading from Numbers. The people in the wilderness were tired, frustrated, and losing heart on a journey that suddenly felt too hard. God did not remove the desert, but he gave them something to look at—a bronze serpent lifted up. Those who looked upon it lived. What saved them was not escape, but trustful looking.

So too with Jesus. Lifted up on the cross, he becomes the place where earth and heaven meet. What looks like failure becomes revelation. What appears to be weakness becomes the greatest strength. On the cross, Jesus reveals himself not only as obedient to the Father—“*I always do what pleases him*”—but as God’s love made flesh, poured out for friends and enemies alike. This is why Christians look to the crucifix, not because we glorify suffering, but because there we see love without limits.

As we draw close to Holy Week, we are invited to keep that question alive in our hearts: “*Who are you, Lord?*” The clearest answer does not come from clever arguments, but from contemplation—looking upon Christ crucified and risen. In a world full of dark and discouraging news, we need somewhere to rest our gaze. When we look upon the Lord—whether in prayer, in the Eucharist, or even in a simple cross or holy image at home—we discover that he is already looking upon us. And that look is always life-giving.

Let me end with another story. A nurse once spoke of a dying patient who could no longer speak or move. The only thing he could do was turn his eyes toward a small crucifix on the wall. Each time fear crept in, his eyes would find the cross again, and his breathing would slowly calm. Later the nurse said, “I realised he wasn’t looking at death—he was looking at love.”

That is the invitation of today’s Gospel. In our misunderstandings, our questions, our wilderness moments, we are asked simply this: Where do we look? If we dare to look upon the Son of Man lifted up, we will discover not a dead end, but the path to life.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God,
who invites us not merely to speak of faith,
but to lift our eyes to his Son
and place our whole trust in the saving power of the cross.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive, O Lord, the gifts we place upon your altar,
and as your Son was lifted up
for the healing of the world,
grant that this sacrifice may cleanse our hearts,
strengthen our faith,
and draw us into deeper communion
with the mystery of your redeeming love.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For when your people wandered in the wilderness,
you did not abandon them to death,
but raised up a sign of healing,
so that all who looked upon it might live.
In the fullness of time,
you raised up your Son upon the cross,
that in him the world might see

not condemnation, but mercy,
not defeat, but the triumph of love.
Lifted up between heaven and earth,
he revealed himself as the One who comes from above,
obedient to your will, faithful even unto death,
and radiant with the light of your truth.
From his pierced side
flow life, forgiveness, and hope for all.
And so, with angels and archangels,
with thrones and dominions,
and with all the hosts and powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim: **Holy, Holy, Holy...**

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Taught by the One who came from above
yet calls us his brothers and sisters,
and trusting in the Father
who looks upon us with mercy and love,
let us dare to pray as Christ himself has taught us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the blindness
that keeps us from recognising your presence among us.
Graciously grant peace in our days, that, supported by
your mercy, we may be freed from fear and
discouragement and live in hopeful expectation as we look
to your Son, who was lifted up for our salvation,
and who comes again in glory.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you were lifted up on the cross
to gather into one the scattered children of God.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and grant us the peace that comes
from trusting in your love— a peace the world cannot give,
a peace rooted in truth, mercy, and self-giving love.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who was lifted up for the life of the world, the One who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who look upon him in faith and are called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In the silence of this moment, we lift our eyes once more to Christ, present among us in this sacrament.

As the people in the desert were healed by looking, so may we be healed by trusting—resting our gaze not on fear or failure, but on the love that has been poured out for us.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Nourished by the Body and Blood of your Son, we ask you, Lord, to deepen our faith in the mystery we have received. May this sacrament strengthen us to walk faithfully through our own wildernesses, and, keeping our eyes fixed on Christ lifted up, may we be led from darkness into light, from confusion into truth, and from death into life. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May God the Father, who so loved the world that he gave his only Son, keep your hearts steadfast in faith.

May Christ the Lord, who was lifted up on the cross to draw all people to himself, be your strength in every trial and your hope in every darkness.

May the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes to the truth, lead you always in the way of life and peace.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go forth in peace, fixing your eyes on Christ lifted up, and bear witness to the life-giving love you have received.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

We are not saved by having all the answers, but by knowing where to look.

When we dare to look upon Christ lifted up, we discover that he has been looking upon us all along—and that look is life.

The Annunciation of the Lord – 25 March 2026

Is 7:10–14; 8:10; Lk 1:26–38

INTRODUCTION

A woman once said that the most important moment of her life happened at her kitchen table. She had been asked to accept a responsibility that felt far beyond her strength. Sitting there alone, she felt afraid, uncertain, and overwhelmed. Everything in her wanted to say no. After a long silence, she whispered a quiet “yes”—not because she had all the answers, but because she trusted she would not be left on her own. Years later she said, “That yes did not make life easier, but it made it meaningful.” That simple story brings us very close to today’s feast. Nine months before Christmas, we celebrate the Annunciation—the beginning of our salvation. God does not force his way into the world. He comes gently, through a question, through an invitation, and he waits for a human response. Heaven pauses in Nazareth, waiting for Mary’s answer. Disturbed and full of questions, she dares to trust God’s promise and speaks a yes that changes history.

Today we celebrate not only God’s loving decision to become human, but also Mary’s courage to open her life completely to God’s will. As we begin this holy Eucharist, let us place our own fears, questions, and hesitations before the Lord, and ask for the grace to say yes—so that Christ may once again take flesh in our lives and in our world.

PENITENTIAL ACT

God comes to us not by force but by invitation.

Let us acknowledge the times we have closed our hearts, and ask the Lord for mercy and forgiveness.

Lord Jesus, you come to do the Father’s will and bring salvation to the world. *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ Jesus, you took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary for our sake. *Christ, have mercy.*

Lord Jesus, you call us to trust and to say yes to God each day. *Lord, have mercy.*

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God of mercy,
who looked with love upon the humility of the Virgin Mary
and sent his Son to dwell among us,
forgive us our sins,
strengthen us in trust and obedience,
and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

Today we celebrate the moment when God's Word took
flesh in Mary's womb. Her humble and trusting "yes"
brought salvation into the world.

Let us join our voices in praise, echoing her faith and
obedience, as we sing the Gloria and glorify God's
wondrous work among us.

COLLECT

O God, you willed that your eternal Word
should take flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Grant, we pray, that as we confess our Redeemer to be
true God and true man, we may share in his divine life
and learn, like Mary,

to welcome your saving will with faith and trust.

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. **Amen.**

HOMILY – Mary's Yes to God

A few years ago, a woman shared a simple story. She had
been asked to take on a responsibility that felt far beyond
her strength. Her first reaction was panic. She said, "I
remember sitting at my kitchen table, staring at the phone,
thinking: *How can I possibly do this?*" But after a long
silence, she whispered a quiet yes—not because she
understood everything, but because she trusted that she
would not be alone. Looking back later, she said, "That yes
changed my life. It was hard, but it opened doors I never
imagined."

That kitchen-table moment is very close to what we
celebrate today.

Nine months before Christmas, we celebrate the beginning
of our salvation. God becomes human. And the question
naturally arises: *Why would God do this?* The answer is

simple and profound—because God is merciful, because he loves humanity, and because he refuses to abandon us when we lose our way. Seeing that we could not save ourselves, God intervened. But notice how God acts: not by force, not from above our heads, but by invitation. God waits for a human yes.

That yes comes from Mary. She is disturbed, confused, full of questions. “How can this be?” she asks—a very human question, the same question we ask when life places something impossible before us. Mary does not pretend to understand. Yet she dares to trust. She entrusts herself not to her own strength but to God’s promise: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” With that reassurance, she says the words that changed history: “Let it be done to me according to your word.”

Because of that yes, God’s Word takes flesh.

It is no accident that today’s Gospel has become a prayer—the Angelus. Three times a day, bells have called believers to pause and return to this moment. The Church

learned very early that this mystery cannot just be heard once; it must be prayed, repeated, “chewed,” as the early monks used to say. Like food slowly digested, God’s Word is meant to sink into us, shape us, and become part of us. In the Angelus, the story does not remain in Nazareth long ago—it becomes *my* story. God’s Word addresses *me*. Like Mary, I am meant.

Mary is often called the first Christian, the model disciple. What is true of her is, in a quiet way, true of us all. God comes to each of us with a personal call. It may disturb us. It may raise questions. It will almost certainly involve struggle. Even Jesus, in Gethsemane, had to learn to pray, “Not my will, but yours be done.” This prayer does not come easily; it must be practiced again and again.

Yet Mary’s life assures us of this: when we dare to say yes, we are not left to carry the weight alone. The same Spirit who overshadowed her is promised to us. Our response to God is personal, but it is never private. Mary’s yes became a blessing for the whole world. Our yes—however small it seems—can become a blessing for

others, right where we are. To live this way is to become a co-worker with God. To trust that if we look to God, our lives will become more than we ever imagined.

Let me end with another small story. An elderly man once said that the Angelus bells had guided his whole life. As a young worker, as a parent, and later as a widower, whenever he heard the bells, he would stop—even briefly—and whisper Mary's words. "I didn't always know what God was doing," he said, "but those words kept me open." And then he smiled and added, "Somehow, God always found room to be born." May Mary's yes teach us to trust. May God's Word take flesh in us. And may our own quiet yes make room for God in the world today.

INVITATION TO THE CREED

As Mary responded to God with her faithful "yes," she embraced the mystery of salvation with trust and courage.

Now let us profess together the faith she lived, affirming in the Creed the truth of Christ—true God and true man—who comes to dwell in our hearts and in our world.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Mary once offered her whole life to God with a trusting yes, let us now offer our gifts and ourselves, asking that the Lord may take what we bring and make it fruitful for the salvation of the world.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord God, accept the gifts we place upon your altar on this feast of the Annunciation.

May the same Spirit who overshadowed the Virgin Mary sanctify these offerings, and may our lives, united with this sacrifice, become a living yes to your will.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Trusting in the God

who asked for Mary's yes

and who never abandons those who rely on him,

let us pray with confidence to our Father in heaven:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and grant peace in our days, that, helped by your mercy,
we may be free from fear and hesitation
and always ready to do your will, as we await the blessed
hope and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
you entered our world through the yes of a humble servant
and became our peace.

Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her unity and peace,
that hearts may be open to God
and the world may be renewed by your love.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world.
Happy are those who, like Mary,
trust God's word and make room for Christ in their lives.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In this Eucharist,
God has once again drawn near to us.
The Word who once took flesh in Mary
has come to dwell in us.
Let us remain for a moment in silence,
asking for the grace to carry Christ into our daily lives
with trust, humility, and love.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord God,
we have received the sacrament of our salvation.
May the mystery we celebrate today
take root in our hearts, so that,
nourished by this Eucharist,
we may live each day with faith and echo Mary's yes
in our words and actions.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May the God of mercy, who chose the Virgin Mary to bring his Son into the world, fill your hearts with trust and joy.

May Christ, who became human for our sake, dwell in you and make your lives a blessing for others.

May the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed Mary, guide you in faith and courage, so that God's will may be fulfilled in you.

And may almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God still waits for a human yes.

Like Mary, we may not understand everything— but if we trust and say yes,

God will always find room to be born again in our world.

Thursday of the 5th Week of Lent – 26 March 2026

Gen 17:3–9; Jn 8:51–59

INTRODUCTION

An elderly couple once spoke of the years when war had torn them apart. Before they separated, there were no documents to sign, no guarantees to rely on—only a promise spoken quietly and held close: *“I will come back for you.”*

For years of uncertainty, distance, and fear, that word sustained them. When they were finally reunited, neither spoke of the danger or the odds. One simply said, *“Your word was enough.”* We understand something deep about promises. Some words merely inform us; others shape our lives. Today we gather before the God whose word does not pass away, whose promise never fails.

In the covenant with Abraham, God binds himself to humanity and even gives his servant a new name. In the Gospel, Jesus reveals that he is more than a messenger of that promise — he is its living fulfilment, the Word who existed before Abraham and who gives life beyond death.

In baptism, that same promise is spoken over each of us by name. We belong to God before we achieve anything, before we prove anything. Our whole life becomes a response to God's "Yes" to us.

Trusting in the faithfulness of God, and grateful for his covenant love, let us now call upon our Lord Jesus Christ and enter more deeply into this sacred celebration.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters, the God of the covenant is faithful, but we have not always trusted his word.

Let us acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus, you are the Word made flesh, faithful to the Father's promise. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you call us to keep your word and live in hope. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are our life beyond death and our peace in every fear. **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, who never withdraws his promise and whose mercy endures forever, forgive us our sins, renew us in the covenant of baptism, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty and faithful God,
you bound yourself to Abraham
and fulfilled your promise in Jesus Christ,
the Word who gives life beyond death.
Cleanse our hearts from every sin,
strengthen us to keep your word,
and make us heirs of your promise,
that we may live as your children in hope and trust.
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. Amen.

HOMILY:

Let me begin with a simple story.

An elderly couple once told how, during the war, they were separated for years with no certainty they would ever meet again. Before parting, they had no documents to sign, no legal guarantees. They simply held hands, looked at each other, and promised: *“I will come back for you.”* For years that promise sustained them. When they were finally reunited, neither spoke about the risk or the odds. One said quietly, “Your word was enough.”

We understand something deep about promises. Today we sign contracts; in earlier times a handshake was enough. And there is still one place where a contract feels too small: when two people in love say “yes” to each other. Their joined hands, wrapped in a stole, become the sign that something far greater than human resolve is at work. God himself confirms their promise and blesses their life together.

That same God is at work in today’s readings. God makes a promise to Abram and even gives him a new name.

Abram becomes Abraham. This is not cosmetic; it is covenant. God binds himself to a human being and says, in effect, *“I will be your God.”* Descendants and homeland are not just rewards; they are signs that God’s word can be trusted. And this was not God’s first promise. After the flood, God made a covenant with Noah and all living creatures, setting the rainbow in the clouds as a sign. The whole Bible, Old and New Testament, is the long, patient story of God’s faithful commitment to humanity.

In baptism, that covenant reaches us personally. God says to each of us, *“You are my child, and I am your God.”* Before we do anything to earn it, before we sign anything, God’s “Yes” is spoken over our lives. That is where our deepest belonging comes from—beyond effort, beyond achievement, beyond any particular place on earth.

The Gospel takes this covenant to its most astonishing depth. Jesus dares to say, *“Before Abraham ever was, I am.”* He is not just another link in the chain of promises; he is the living Word through whom all promises are made. John’s Gospel insists that there is more to Jesus than a

world full of books could contain. The one who existed before Abraham becomes flesh, walks our roads, and faces hostility—even stones raised against him. And yet this same Jesus says, *“Whoever keeps my word will never see death.”* His word is not theory; it is life. Physical death will still come, but it will not have the last word. The life born of relationship with him deepens beyond death. So Lent invites us to a quiet response. To thank God for his covenant. To trust his word rather than our own guarantees. To keep Jesus’ word, as he kept his Father’s word, and to live from that promise rather than from fear or the hunger for glory.

Let me end with another story.

A child once asked her grandmother why she still prayed every night after so many years. The grandmother smiled and said, “Because God has never broken his promise to me.” Then she added, “And if I forget everything else before I die, I hope I remember this: I am his, and he is mine.”

We do not need a contract for that. God’s word is enough.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As children of the covenant,
let us place upon the altar the bread and wine of our lives,
trusting not in our guarantees but in God’s faithful promise.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive, O Lord, the gifts we offer,
signs of our trust and thanksgiving,
and transform them by your Spirit
into the sacrament of the new and eternal covenant.
May this sacrifice strengthen us to keep your word faithfully
and to live from the hope you have given us.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For you are the God of the covenant,
faithful across the ages.
You bound yourself to Abraham
and shaped a people to walk in your promise.

In the fullness of time, you sent your eternal Word,
who existed before all ages, to dwell among us
and reveal that your promise is life itself.

In him, death is overcome,
fear is unmasked,
and your word becomes our hope.

Through his obedience and love,
you draw us into the covenant sealed in his blood,
that we might live as your children forever.

And so, with angels and saints,
and with Saint Benedict and all who trusted your word,
we proclaim your glory,
as we sing:

Holy, Holy, Holy...

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

God has spoken his "Yes" over our lives
before we ever spoke to him.

As children of the covenant, let us now pray with
confidence the prayer Jesus entrusted to us.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from fear and mistrust,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by your promise and helped by your mercy,
we may always be free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the living Word of the Father,
the promise that does not fail.

Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will,
who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who is before Abraham and yet walks with us still.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb,
who keep his word and live from his promise.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In this Eucharist,
God has once again spoken his promise to us—
not in writing, but in bread broken and life given.
May what we have received
sink deeply into our hearts: *We are his, and he is ours.*

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Faithful God,
you have nourished us
with the bread of life and the cup of salvation.
Strengthen us by this sacrament
to keep your word with trust and perseverance,
and to live as heirs of your promise,
until we share fully in the life
you have prepared for us beyond death.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May the God of the covenant bless you,
the Father who called Abraham by name,
the Son whose word is life beyond death,
and the Holy Spirit
who seals God's promise in your hearts.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, trusting God's promise
and keeping his word in your lives.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

God does not make contracts with us — he makes
promises. And his word is enough.

Friday of the 5th Week of Lent – 27 March 2026

Jer 20:10–13; Jn 10:31–42

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes rejection comes quietly.

A word not returned. A look that turns away.

A door that once felt open now seems closed.

A young man once shared how, after years of loyalty at work, he suddenly found himself isolated. No explanation. No clear fault. Just silence. He replayed every conversation in his mind, wondering what had gone wrong. Only later did he realise that the pain itself had driven him to prayer—and there, in the stillness, he discovered that he was not abandoned after all.

The prophet Jeremiah knew this loneliness. Jesus knew it even more deeply. Today, as we draw closer to Good Friday, we come with our own experiences of rejection, misunderstanding, and fear. We place them before the Lord who remained faithful when others turned against him—and who remains faithful to us.

Let us call upon Jesus Christ, our strength and our hope.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Trusting in God who sees the heart and never abandons the faithful, let us acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate these sacred mysteries.

You were sent to heal the contrite of heart.

Lord, have mercy.

You stood firm in truth when others rejected you.

Christ, have mercy.

You never cease to call us back to trust in the Father.

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God,
who strengthens the faithful in times of trial,
have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Merciful God, when we are rejected and misunderstood, you remain our refuge and strength.
Give us the courage to trust in your justice,

the grace to remain faithful in doing good,
and hearts rooted in your love, that we may follow your
Son even on the way of the cross.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son... **Amen.**

HOMILY: Trusting God in the Face of Rejection

A story is told of a gardener who planted a beautiful tree in his yard. Every day he tended it carefully, watered it, and watched it grow. Yet, despite his care, some people in the neighbourhood would mock the tree, kick at the soil around it, or even try to break its branches. The gardener felt hurt, frustrated, and at times angry. But he did not abandon the tree. He continued to nurture it, trusting that one day it would bear fruit and that others might come to admire its beauty. In the end, the tree flourished, not because of the approval of others, but because it was rooted in care, patience, and trust.

This image brings to mind the prophet Jeremiah. He lived in a time of great turmoil, a time when the people resisted the Word of God. Jeremiah devoted himself wholeheartedly to his mission, warning of judgment and

calling the people to conversion. Yet, his life was marked by rejection, false accusations, and the cruelty of those he sought to guide. At times, he felt bitter, even wishing for vengeance against his enemies. But Jeremiah knew where to bring his feelings—into prayer. He lamented honestly before God, expressing his pain, his anger, even his desire for justice. And through it all, he trusted that God would act, that his opponents could not ultimately destroy him, and that his faithfulness would bear fruit in God's time. In today's Gospel, we see a similar scene in Jesus' life. People wanted to stone him because of his claims about his divine origin, because his message challenged their understanding of God. And yet, even in the face of hostility, Jesus remained steadfast. He did not strike back or seek revenge. He pointed instead to his works—works of love, healing, and truth—that revealed God's presence. Through these works, some hearts were touched, and faith began to grow in unexpected places. Jesus, like Jeremiah, continued faithfully, even when the path was hard and rejection seemed relentless.

What does this teach us? Life often places us in situations where we face hostility, rejection, or misunderstanding. Perhaps at work, in our families, or even in our communities, we encounter criticism that feels unfair or hurtful. Our natural response may be to defend ourselves, to react in anger, or to withdraw. Yet, Jeremiah and Jesus show us another way: bring our emotions to God in prayer, leave judgment in God's hands, and continue the work we are called to do. Trust that God is at work, even when we do not see immediate results.

Jesus' teaching today goes further: every human being bears the image of God. Every life is sacred, imbued with dignity and a calling. The hostility Jesus faced was not only a challenge to his mission but a reminder of the truth he proclaimed—truth that calls us to respect, protect, and honor each person, even those who oppose or misunderstand us. As we prepare for Holy Week, we see the fullness of this truth in Jesus' passion: a man fully human, fully divine, whose love remains steadfast even in the face of hatred and death. In his suffering, in his

steadfastness, God's love for humanity is revealed in its purest form.

So let us, like the gardener, like Jeremiah, and like Jesus, remain faithful to the work entrusted to us. Let us bring our pain, our doubts, and even our dark emotions to God. Let us persevere in doing good, trusting that God is at work through us. And let us remember that even when others do not understand or approve, God's love and justice will ultimately prevail.

I will close with another story: a small child once wanted to draw a picture for her mother. She worked tirelessly, even when her crayons broke and the paper tore. When she finally showed her mother, it was not perfect, but her mother's eyes filled with joy because she saw the love and effort behind it. In the same way, God sees the love, effort, and faithfulness in our lives—even when others fail to notice or misunderstand us. Our calling is to remain faithful, rooted in God's love, trusting that our efforts are never in vain.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Let us offer these gifts to God,
placing before him our struggles, our perseverance,
and our trust that he brings life even from rejection.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive, O Lord, the offerings of your faithful people,
and transform our fear into trust,
our wounds into sources of grace,
and our faithfulness into a sign of your love at work in the
world. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For through your beloved Son you revealed your
faithfulness when he was rejected, misunderstood, and
condemned. In his obedience and trust,
you showed us that your love is strongest
where suffering seems to prevail.

As we follow him on the way of the cross,
you strengthen us to remain faithful, to do good without
fear, and to entrust our lives to your saving will.
And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and
Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as
without end we acclaim: **Holy, Holy, Holy...**

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Trusting in the Father who never abandons those who
seek him, and confident in his mercy,
let us pray as the Lord Jesus taught us:

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from fear, discouragement, and despair.
Graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may remain faithful in doing good
and trust in your saving love,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you remained at peace
even when others raised stones against you.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In this Eucharist,
we receive the One who was rejected
yet never withdrew his love.
As Christ now dwells within us,
may we leave this place strengthened—
ready to trust, to persevere,
and to remain faithful in doing good,
even when the path is hard.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

May this sacred Communion, O Lord,
sustain us on the way of the cross,
strengthen our trust in your justice,
and help us bear witness to your love
through perseverance and faithfulness.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May God, who remained faithful to his Son
in suffering and rejection, strengthen you in every trial.
May Christ, who trusted the Father even unto death,
fill you with courage and hope.
May the Holy Spirit root you firmly in God's love
and keep you faithful in doing good.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace,
glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Faithfulness is not measured by approval,
but by trust.
Even when rejected,
God is at work—
and love is never in vain.

Saturday of the 5th Week of Lent – 28 March 2026

Ezekiel 37:21–28; John 11:45–57

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a friend told me about an old oak tree in her neighbourhood. For decades, it had stood alone at the corner of a busy street, its branches twisted and gnarled. Many thought it was too old, too fragile, perhaps even dangerous. Then one spring, a violent storm struck, breaking some of its limbs. Many believed the tree would not survive. But in the weeks that followed, the oak grew new shoots and leaves, more abundant than ever before. Its neighbours, who had long worried about it, gathered around it, marvelled, and cared for it together. What seemed broken had become a source of life and hope. Today, as Lent approaches its high point, we are invited to reflect on a far greater source of life: Jesus Christ. His cross, at first a sign of death, becomes the source of life for all. Just as the oak was renewed through the storm, so Christ brings hope, healing, and unity where there is

despair and division. In this Eucharist, we place our lives before him, trusting that even what is fragile or broken can be transformed by his love.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you are our King, often unrecognized yet full of power. Lord, have mercy.

You are our Savior, often misunderstood yet always ready to help. Christ, have mercy.

You are our Healer, often ignored yet truly present among us. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, who calls each of us by name, forgive our sins, heal our hearts, and gather us into one family through the life-giving love of Christ. **Amen.**

COLLECT

Lord God, you bring life from death and hope from despair. As we journey through these final days of Lent, open our hearts to the renewing power of the cross. Teach us to value each person, to act in love, and to seek unity in our communities. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HOMILY: “The Life-Giving Power of the Cross”

A few years ago, a friend told me about an old oak tree in her neighbourhood. For decades, it had stood alone at the corner of a busy street, its branches twisted and gnarled, and many thought it was too old, too fragile, and even dangerous. Yet one spring, a storm blew through, breaking some of its limbs—but instead of dying, the tree sprouted new shoots and leaves, more abundant than before. Its neighbours, who had long worried about it, now gathered around it, marvelling at its resilience and new life. The tree had become a source of beauty and unity for everyone. Today’s readings invite us to reflect on a far greater source of life and renewal: Jesus Christ. In the Gospel, we hear how the Pharisees and Jewish authorities responded to Jesus—not with openness or gratitude, but with fear and suspicion. They were unsettled by his words, his miracles, and the new way he lived God’s love among people. Change frightened them. Transformation challenged the status quo they clung to. Caiaphas, the high priest, gave a chillingly pragmatic reasoning: “It is better for one man to

die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.” To protect the collective, one individual could be sacrificed.

But here is the profound irony: Jesus did die—but not for the reason Caiaphas imagined. He died not to preserve an institution or maintain power, but out of love for each individual, to gather the scattered children of God into one family. In Jesus, the individual is never expendable. Each of us is called by name, precious in God’s sight. Just as Jesus called Lazarus from the tomb, Zacchaeus down from the tree, and Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb, he calls each of us to life, to a renewed relationship with God and with one another.

Through his death on the cross, Jesus transformed despair into hope, fear into unity, and division into community.

What looked like an ending—the loss of life—was in fact the beginning of a new time. God’s love, revealed most fully in the crucifixion, gathered people together around the cross. It revealed that true power is not about control or pragmatism, but about self-giving love. It shows us that the

life of each person matters infinitely, and the good of the collective can never come at the cost of the individual’s dignity.

As we enter Holy Week, we are invited to stand before this cross, the paradox of death and life intertwined, and allow ourselves to be transformed. Like the old oak tree, whose broken limbs gave rise to new growth, the suffering of Jesus gave rise to abundant life for all. His love calls us to care for one another with the same tender attention he showed, valuing every person as he did.

So let us approach this week with hearts open to transformation, willing to leave behind fear, suspicion, and complacency. Let us allow Jesus’ life-giving love to reshape our relationships, our communities, and ourselves. And like those neighbours who gathered around the resilient oak, let us come together, drawn by the power of God’s love, around the cross—the ultimate symbol of life and unity.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Friends, let us place our gifts on the altar in gratitude for Christ's love, who transforms suffering into hope, fear into unity, and death into life. May our offering reflect our desire to follow him more faithfully.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, receive these gifts we bring, and by the power of your Spirit transform them into the life-giving presence of your Son. May this Eucharist strengthen us to witness your love in our families, our communities, and the world, bringing hope where there is despair and unity where there is division. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. You call us to new life through the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ. Though he came to serve and to heal, the powers of this world sought to silence him. Yet, in the apparent defeat of the cross, you

revealed the triumph of love over fear, life over death, and unity over division.

Through the suffering and death of Christ, your mercy gathers the scattered, lifts up the broken, and restores hope to the weary. What seemed a moment of loss became a source of abundant life for all. Even now, as we prepare for the joy of the resurrection, we give thanks that you continue to transform our lives, our communities, and our world. Therefore, with angels and saints, we proclaim your glory, as we join the unending hymn of praise:

All: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

United by the cross and trusting in God's care, let us pray together, bringing all our hopes, fears, and brokenness before the Father who calls us by name.

EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil. Strengthen our hearts with the courage of your cross, so that we may face suffering with hope, act with compassion, and live in unity

with all. May your Spirit guide our steps, heal our divisions, and transform our weakness into strength, that your love may shine through us in every place.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus, you are our peace. May the cross, which turned death into life, shape our hearts and guide our actions. Make us instruments of your reconciliation, so that in families, communities, and nations, fear is replaced by trust, suspicion by understanding, and division by love. May your life-giving power flow through us, bringing healing to the broken and hope to the weary. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God, who calls each of us by name. As he raised Lazarus from the tomb, he invites us to rise from despair, fear, and division. Blessed are those who come to this table, for they will be strengthened to witness the life-giving love of Christ in the world.

SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the Body and Blood of Christ, we are strengthened to live as witnesses to his love. Just as the oak tree grew stronger after the storm, so may our lives, even after trials or suffering, bear new growth. May we bring hope to the hopeless, unity to the divided, and life to all we encounter. The cross reminds us that each person is precious, and the life of each matters infinitely.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord God, may the grace we have received at this table shape our lives. Help us to follow Christ's example of self-giving love, valuing each person, caring for the weak, and seeking unity. Strengthen us in faith and courage, so that the life-giving power of the cross may shine through all we do. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING

May God, who called each of us by name, and whose love transforms suffering into life, bless you, keep you in hope, and strengthen you to witness his mercy and compassion.

Go in peace, ready to bring life, healing, and unity to all you meet, carrying the power of the cross in your heart.

All: **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go forth, glorifying the Lord by your life and sharing his love with all.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

The cross turns what seems lost into life, what seems broken into hope. Like the oak tree after the storm, or Lazarus called from the tomb, your life, renewed in Christ, can bear abundant fruit. Let love, courage, and care guide every step.