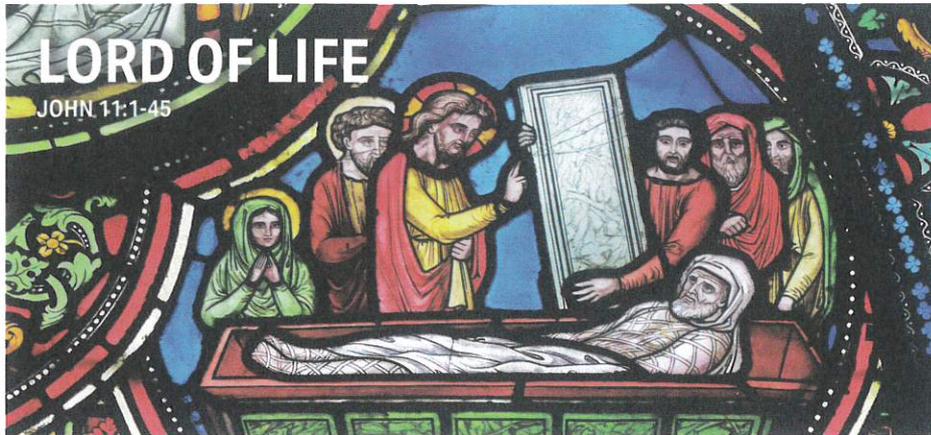


Sunday Message

5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year A • 22 March 2026 • Psalter Week 1



LORD OF LIFE

JOHN 11:1-45

The story of the raising of Lazarus from the dead is the last great sign or miracle Jesus works in John's Gospel. It is a powerful demonstration that Jesus is the life of the world.

Lazarus, a friend of Jesus, is ill. His sisters ask Jesus to come to see him. But Jesus delays a while. By the time he finally arrives, Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days. Upset and disappointed, Lazarus's sister, Martha, goes to meet him. In the conversation that follows, Jesus describes who he is and makes an astonishing promise: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

Later, gathered around the tomb with Martha, Mary, his disciples and some friends who had come to console the grieving sisters, Jesus works a sign to show his power and to demonstrate that he is indeed the "resurrection and the life". He asks that the stone sealing the tomb be removed. Then he prays, and bids Lazarus to come out. Still in his burial shroud, Lazarus emerges alive.

For John, the raising of Lazarus is a sign that Jesus has the power to give eternal life. It is also a promise that on the last day he will raise our mortal flesh.

Lazarus, the one whom Jesus loves, can be seen as representing all those whom Jesus loves. Just as Jesus gave life to Lazarus, he gives life to us, too. This is the Good News. It is the very foundation of our faith. ■

REFLECT

Our faith is a precious gift. Sometimes we can forget just how extraordinarily precious this faith of ours is, how fragile. It's a gift we should treasure and never take for granted.

Faith changes everything. In early 2022 Richard Gaillardetz was discussing with his wife what to do when he retired in a few years from his position as professor of systematic theology at Boston University. He had been dean of theology there as well as a former president of the Theological Association of America. He had a special interest in Vatican II and had written and lectured widely on the Council and its documents.

Richard was looking forward to his retirement – and then all changed, changed utterly. On 22/2/22 – a date he said was very

easy to remember – he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and given a maximum of 18 months to live. On that day, all his plans – for retirement, the books he was going to write, the places he and his wife were going to visit – went out of the window. He had to manage instead for his treatment and his death. He had to put his affairs in order.

Richard began to write a blog about his illness, which was published as a book after his death. He died on 7 November 2023. In the book *While I breathe, I hope*, Richard writes beautifully about the consolation his faith gave him as he approached his end. He believed wholeheartedly in the Gospel, and that belief sustained him to the last.

Richard Gaillardetz knew that the gift of faith offers us two of the most wonderful consolations. First, the knowledge that

SAY

Say with Martha: "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into this world."

PRAY

Pray for your deceased loved ones and the deceased members of your local community. Give thanks for their lives. Ask the Lord of life to take them to himself.

DO

There is an old saying: What a man's faith is, he is. In other words, a person's faith shapes the kind of person he or she is. Think about how you live your faith. Does your faith in God shape who you are? Can people see it?

LEARN

Our God is the God of life – not of death.

The Christian believes in the resurrection of the dead. This is at the core of our faith.

The Christian opposes anything that is not life-giving.



God is with us in every minute of every day, and that with God by our side, there is no trial, hardship or setback we cannot face or overcome. God always holds us close. God's loving presence always sustains us.

The second consolation is the promise of eternal life. One of the most beautiful lines in all of scripture assures us: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of people what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9). We know that our death is not an exit to oblivion but the threshold to a new, transformed, glorified life with Christ in God for ever. When our time comes, however it comes, we know, as Richard Gaillardetz knew, that we need have no fear. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*Give me justice, O God,
and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless.
From the deceitful and cunning rescue me,
for you, O God, are my strength.*

COLLECT

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God,
may we walk eagerly in that same charity
with which, out of love for the world,
your Son handed himself over to death... **Amen.**

FIRST READING Ezekiel 37:12-14

A reading from the Prophet Ezekiel.

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 into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 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 am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 130(129):1-2.3-4.5-6b.6c-8.R.7bc

**R: With the LORD there is mercy,
in him is plentiful redemption.**

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ears be attentive
to the sound of my pleadings. **R.**
2. If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you is found forgiveness,
that you may be revered. **R.**
3. I long for you, O LORD,
my soul longs for his word.
My soul awaits the Lord
more than watchmen for daybreak. **R.**
4. More than watchmen for daybreak,
let Israel hope for the LORD.
For with the LORD there is mercy,
in him is plentiful redemption.
It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities. **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 8:8-11

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL John 11:25a. 26

R: Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

I am the Resurrection and the life, says the Lord.
Everyone who believes in me shall never die.

R: Glory to you, O Christ, Son of the living God.

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

(a longer version may be read: John 11:1-45)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

At that time:

The sisters of Lazarus sent to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it he said, 'This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.'

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.'

Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.'

Jesus was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?'

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, by this time there will be a smell, for he has been dead four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out.' The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Hear us, almighty God,
and, having instilled in your servants
the teachings of the Christian faith,
graciously purify them
by the working of this sacrifice...

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Everyone who lives and believes in me
will not die for ever, says the Lord.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We pray, almighty God,
that we may always be counted among the members of
Christ,
in whose Body and Blood we have communion...

Amen.