

During this unprecedented time in our world's history, we offer you the following material for your praying and reflecting on God's Word.

## Introduction

"While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them 'Why are you frightened and why do doubts arise in your hearts?'"

It was the time after the death of Jesus. His disciples were in the upper room reflecting on the events that had just happened. They were locked in the room, scared as they were afraid of what the Jews might do to his disciples. They were already in fear but can you imagine the fear rise dramatically when Jesus appears to them? They were terrified and doubtful. Our current situation will create a lot of fear and doubt, some outright terror, but Jesus reminds us that we have a safe haven with him. He can take all our fears, our anxieties, our confusion, our doubtfulness and offer them up to God. Our hope and faith are found in God.

As we navigate a new normal with many restrictions, our spiritual lives do not need to suffer. There are still ways to observe this Holy season of Lent. The traditional practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are still possible. It is imperative that during this time, we continue with our Lenten practices and to use this trial as an opportunity to elevate, adapt and deepen our relationship with Jesus.

## Lectio Divina with the Sunday Gospel

Lectio Divina means 'divine reading'. It is a way to pray using the holy scriptures in a step-by-step process.

Gather the entire family around and make the sign of the Cross. Light a candle.

**Leader: "Holy Spirit, you inspired the authors of Sacred Scripture to write what you wanted us to know for the sake of our salvation. Inspire us now to hear those words not only with our ears, but our hearts, so that we might know your saving Word for us today."**

- Have one person **read** the scripture slowly, out loud and have a few moments of silence afterwards. (It may be helpful for everyone to have a copy of the reading).
- **Read** the scripture again out loud and choose a single word or short phrase that touches, speaks or surprises you. Share with everyone.
- **Read** the scripture out loud one more time and discuss what is happening directly in the text.
- **Meditate** on what God is doing now in our lives through this text.
- **Respond** to what God is doing through prayer.
- **Contemplate** on what God is asking of me through this text and how to use these words as a gift for others through my actions.
- After a period of silence, end with the Sign of the Cross.

**The Holy Gospel for March 29, 2020**

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

“Now a certain man, Lazarus, was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill.

The sisters sent a message to Jesus, ‘Lord, he whom you love is ill.’ But when Jesus heard this, he said, ‘This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.’

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having 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.’

When Jesus arrived he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.’ 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, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’

She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’

Jesus was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus began to weep.

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 have kept this man from dying?’ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave and a stone was lying against it.

Jesus said, ‘Take away the stone.’ Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him ‘Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.’ 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 looked upward and said, ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.’

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him and let him go.’

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

## Family Activities

~ The death and raising of Lazarus show that faith and hope are linked. In their anguish and grief, both Martha and Mary scold Jesus for not being present sooner. Jesus responds to Martha's rebuke by telling her that indeed her brother would rise again from the dead. She replies, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Her faith and hope in this is remarkable, all the more so because it was not widely shared, especially among the Sadducees. As disciples, Jesus expects faith and continued hope from each one of us. Write FAITH and HOPE on a large piece of paper and post it somewhere around the house. During the week, each member of the family will write down what FAITH and HOPE means and looks like to them.

~ Martha and Mary approach Jesus with confidence, and he responds with compassion. Lazarus' death is deeply troubling for Jesus, even though he has the power to raise Lazarus from the dead. We see how Jesus is disturbed by Lazarus' death; he even weeps for his friend. Jesus shows compassion to those who are mourning, most especially Martha and Mary. In the face of the despair of death, Martha clings to the hope of the resurrection and confidently states that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. As disciples, we too must have confidence in the power of the Gospel to transform and liberate us from the darkness of despair. Think about and pray for a person who is struggling. Make a list of ways your family can show compassion and caring for others during the last weeks of Lent.

~ Love abounds in this story. Jesus' love for Lazarus, Martha, and Mary is the same love that God our Father has for each one of us. Jesus conquers sin so that we too may share in everlasting life. It is the hope of new life and the resurrection of the dead that we hold onto. Jesus has trampled down death on the Cross, and just as he did for Lazarus, he too calls us to come out from whatever tomb we find ourselves in. Love opens the tomb of our hearts to receive Jesus so that we can approach him as his beloved children. Each member of the family can tell the story of a family member, a friend, or even a well-known person who has died recently. After each story, say the following prayer. "Jesus, you promised that if we live and believe in you we will have life everlasting. Please come and grant him/her life forever with you."

## General Intercessions

Let us offer up to God our prayers and needs:

1. God of great mercy and compassion. We pray for the Church, called and created by God to be a radical sign of God's reign in the world today. For our willingness to be shaped and fashioned by our God for our good and the good of all creation. We Pray to the Lord.
2. God of justice and lover of mercy. We pray for world leaders and officials responsible for the common good of all people. We pray for moral and ethical government practices and policies that protect the dignity of all. We Pray to the Lord.
3. God of human dignity and right living. We pray for an end to all forms of violence and actions of hate that break down and destroy human freedom and dignity. We pray for places that no longer know safety and peace as a way of living. We pray for the physical well-being of our global community as world health officials battle the ever-spreading COVID-19. We Pray to the Lord.

## At Home Sunday Faith Reflection

St. Gianna Beretta Molla Parish  
Sunday March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020

*(General Intercession continued...)*

4. God of all that we see. We pray that in this new year of 2020 we may be given clarity of vision and the ability to discern what is right and true. We pray for the grace to shape our lives on that which will only lead to a deeper and more fruitful life in you. We Pray to the Lord.

5. God of eternal life. We pray for all who have died and gone before us. May eternal rest be granted unto them, and may perpetual light shine upon them. We Pray to the Lord.

Gathering all of our prayers and petitions into one we pray as Jesus taught us...

***Our Father, who art in heaven....***

### **Closing Prayer**

*Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for insights gained, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:*

**Good and gracious Father,  
when your Son Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead,  
he showed that we will be given new life.**

**We walk every day in the light and hope  
of the resurrection.**

**Help us to live each day in gratitude  
for the gift of our very being.**

**Move our hearts and minds to share  
the gifts of life and hope.**

**Help us to seek freedom from all the bonds  
that still hold us.**

**Help us to reach out to those outside  
our community's acceptance.**

**We remember especially \_\_\_\_\_.** *(name silently or aloud)*

**We pray this through Christ our Lord  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**