

Fifth Week of **Lent**

PRAYER OF THANKS FOR LIFE

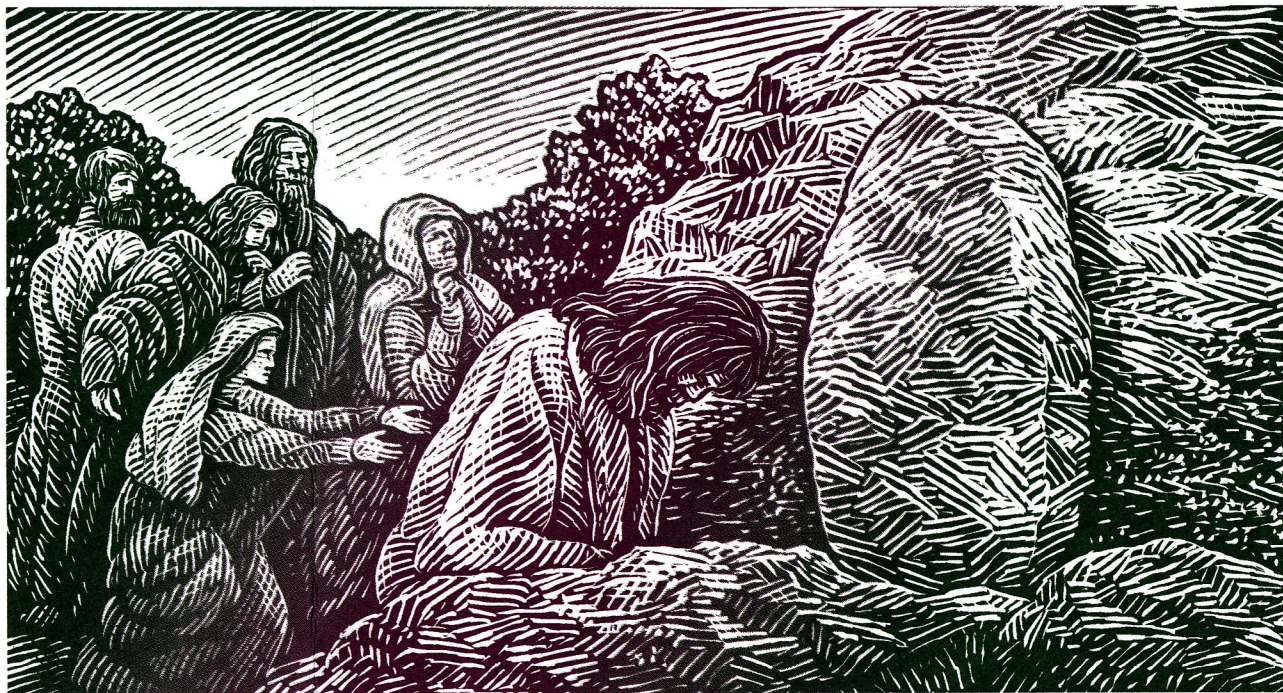
You give us life, O generous God—
so many varieties and stages of life.
Help us to honor them all.
You give fresh, new life—
growing in wombs and newly birthed.
Help us to welcome and care for each.

Life continues in some for a long time,
even when they are weak or ill.
Help us to honor and serve our elders,
watching with them and sharing in their last days.

You give to each of us a life to live,
a way to learn of and work for your kingdom.
Help us choose our paths wisely.
You give us eternal life after this one ends.
Help us to prepare for it now.

You are more generous than we can understand.
Let us sing thanks and praise to you all our days.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



MARCH 9, 2008 **THANKS BE TO GOD**

Jesus wept. His dear friend Lazarus had died. Although we read further along in this Gospel passage (John 11:1–45) that Jesus brought Lazarus back to life, we know that Jesus felt true sorrow for his friends. He was so moved that the people looking on said, “See how much he loved him.” God loves us this much too. He sent his Son, who brought Lazarus back to life, to bring us back to life also.

In fact, Jesus was about to do far more in order to save us. He prayed to God the Father to bring Lazarus back. But Jesus had to give up his life in order to bring us to new life in heaven when we die. Lazarus was untied from his burial cloths by Jesus’ command. We are untied from sin by Christ’s sacrifice.

Not only did Jesus save Lazarus—and us; Jesus tried to help us understand what he was doing. He knew that people were confused about who he was. Standing in front of Lazarus’ tomb, Jesus thanked God for hearing his prayer “that they may believe that you sent me” (John 11:42). By restoring Lazarus to his human life, Jesus gave disciples of all times a sign of the power over death that he and his Father shared.

Imagine how thankful Lazarus’ sisters Mary and Martha felt. Imagine what they might have said to Jesus. How should we respond to the new life we have been given in Baptism? It is a gift too great for words, yet we can give thanks in our own way.

This Week at Home

MONDAY, MARCH 10 IS ANYONE WITHOUT SIN?

In today's Gospel reading (John 8:1-11), the leaders bring to Jesus a woman who has been caught in sin, asking if she should be stoned. Their plan was to trick him into disagreeing with what Moses had said. Instead of answering their question he reminded them that they, too, were sinners. The first stone should be thrown by the person who had never sinned, he said. They each left quietly. Then he told the woman not to commit such a sin again. Such powerful lessons. None of us is without sin, but we have a compassionate Savior. This is a good time to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation. Find out when your parish is offering it.

TUESDAY, MARCH 11 IMPORTANT AND URGENT

The busier we are, the more responsibilities we have, the more we need to center ourselves in the Lord. It is a Catholic practice to spend time in front of the tabernacle, talking with Christ in the Eucharist about our needs, our plans, and our worries. Pope John Paul II said, "How often, dear brothers and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!" Make time today to visit the Blessed Sacrament in a church. Be at peace. Talk with him.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12 OUR GIFT OF LIFE

"I did not come on my own, but he sent me," Jesus said to the Jews in today's Gospel reading (John 8:31-42). Each of us can say the same thing. We are here because God wills it. Life is a gift for which we can never say enough thanks. *O God, creator of all people, I thank you for giving me life in this world. Help me to use every talent and gift you gave me in the service of your will. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THURSDAY, MARCH 13 THEY ARE ALONE

Often when a person becomes very weak and fragile from old age or illness they can no longer go outside. Visit a nursing home or a housebound parishioner or neighbor. Send a little note or card. If appropriate, perhaps you could bring the Eucharist to someone who desires it. Through your presence, your cards, and your prayers you can help such a person feel connected. You can be the presence of Christ for them.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14 LIGHT A CANDLE

The little vigil lights in church are a sign of our continuing prayers. The candle keeps our prayer always before the Lord, even when we are not in church. When you go to worship this weekend, spend some time talking with the Lord about the special need that you have at that moment, then light a candle. Put what is in your heart and mind in Christ's hands and heart. Lighting a candle can also help you to remember your prayer as you go about your work.

SATURDAY, MARCH 15 FAMILY MATTERS

Today we celebrate Saint Joseph, who cared for Jesus with a father's love. The scriptures tell us very little about him, but we know the most important thing: he put the needs of his family above his own. When Mary was found to be pregnant, he married her to protect her. When Herod killed all the baby boys in Bethlehem, Joseph took Jesus and Mary to Egypt to keep them safe. Joseph thought of others in his family first. Be like Joseph: think of one thing you can do for each member of your family today.

