

Prayerful preparation for Fifth Sunday of Lent : Year A

Set aside a prayer time and begin by relaxing and coming to stillness. Read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, paying attention to any words that stand out for you. Stay with them: is God is present to you?

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

I am the resurrection and the life.

Jesus said, 'This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.'

Jesus said 'I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'

Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me.'

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go free.'

Lectio Divina

This type of prayer suitable for most people. However, it is not the only approach. 'One of the great tragedies during the past several centuries is that we have been shown a form of prayer which was suitable for many but not for all. We may have been led to believe that this way was the best for everyone. When some people did not find it helpful the conclusion maybe was that there was something wrong with the person rather than the method. People may have given up on prayer or gone through the motions without any real interior effect or benefit.

Ignatian prayer is a way of praying even older than *Lectio Divina*. Basically, it involves remembering an event of salvation history, Old or New Testament. However, it involves more than just remembering a historical event. Praying people are encouraged to relive, participate in, and thus make real the past event.

If your style of prayer suits you then do continue.

Remember the old adage, 'pray as you can, not as you can't.'

Reflection

Jesus is fully human and fully divine. Both natures are in evidence in this scripture piece. Notice Jesus' humanity in how he responds to the death of his dear friend, and his divinity in raising him from the dead. Which nature is easier for you to relate to? Do Jesus' tears move you?

Lazarus is the sign that the divinity / power in Jesus is what raises life out of death. There is physical death but there is also a living death which we sometimes experience. When we escape from life and sleep through periods of our life, we can feel dead inside. Instead of trusting ourselves to the risks and joys of life, the complexities of being human, we choose the comfort of sleep. We avoid the duty to live as a child of God, who is a loving Father.

'Lazarus laughed' a play by Eugene O'Neill has Lazarus saying 'I heard the heart of Jesus laughing in my heart.' Do you ever experience the promise of new life and joy?

Ignatian Prayer

A suggested structure for those who benefit from structure.

1. Choose your scripture
2. Settle yourself into a still mind.
3. Ask for the grace you think you will need in this time of prayer.
4. We first see the scene in our imagination in concrete detail, using all five senses, and then we place our self in the scene. We may be an observer, or we may feel drawn to focus on one person or aspect of the scene.
5. We then listen to the thoughts and feelings that arise, and reflect on them.
6. We identify what we have seen or learned.
7. We talk with God the Father, Jesus Christ, and Mary. Sometimes we listen.
8. We close with an Our Father.

Adapted from *Prayer and Temperament*, C. P. Michael and M. C. Norrissey.