

# GOD'S STORY IN HUMAN WORDS:

## TRAVELING DEEPER INTO SCRIPTURE

*In the beginning  
was the word,  
and the Word was  
with God, and*

**Small Groups**  
Lent 2020

**“To achieve the saving purpose,  
Sacred Scripture,  
by the working of the Holy Spirit,  
makes human words,  
written in human fashion,  
become the Word of God.”**

*Pope Francis, Aperuit Illis, 9.*



## God's Story in Human Words

Story telling is the oldest of all the arts. As far back as anyone can remember, people told stories to each other; and as far back as memory goes, people listened to the stories. If we believe that the divine voice lies behind the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the New Testament, then we must acknowledge that the God who speaks there is a marvelous storyteller.

Jesus was perhaps the best storyteller the world has ever seen. His stories, remembered and passed on by his followers, move us before we know why we are being moved. As relevant today as when they were first shared orally and then written down, they help us find meaning in our lives. Far from a cold rehearsal of historical facts, each narrative, song, prayer, conversation, sermon or vision is an engaging composition, inviting the reader to follow, watch, and learn as the drama unfolds.

### Weekly Themes

**Week One** (March 1- 7):

*"You must never despair of human nature"*

Mahatma Gandhi

**Week Two** (March 8-14)

*"All that I have seen teaches me to trust the creator for all I have not seen"*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Week Three** (March 15-21)

*"Hope is a slippery thing"*

Joan Chittister

**Week Four** (March 22-28)

*"You wouldn't believe what once or twice I have seen"*

Mary Oliver

**Week Five** (March 29-April 4))

*"Every moment of your life is a second chance"*

Rick Price

# BEFORE EACH MEETING

## Review Sharing Guidelines

1. Please show up on time.
2. What is shared in the group stays in the group.
3. Everyone's input is valuable. At the same time, no one is required to speak.
4. Please only share on the level at which you are comfortable.
5. Please limit your sharing to a few minutes and wait until everyone has had the opportunity to share before you share again.
6. Only one person speaks at a time.
7. Please, no cross talking, which means no commenting on another person's share. "I" statements are better than "you" statements.
8. Please, no side conversations. Value one another by listening.
9. Please silence your cell phone and put it away.. If you need to make a call or text, please take it outside.

## Opening Prayer *(please read together)*

We bless you Lord for our calling  
for nurturing in each of us a disciple's heart.  
A heart that rejoices in your coming,  
a heart sustained by your Spirit,  
a heart encouraged by fellow disciples.

May there grow in each of our hearts  
the disciple's commitment to serve,  
the disciple's willingness to learn,  
and the disciple's joy in becoming  
a medium of your grace.

AMEN

From "Prayers for Parish Groups," Harrington and Kavanagh

## AT THE END OF EACH MEETING

**Leader:** Let us pray to the God who supports and nourishes us along the path of life. Let us thank God for the signs of care and loving providence that we find so reassuring along the way.

Response: *God of hope, accompany us along the way.*

In the fear and apprehension, in the hesitation and insecurity that we experience as we follow you....

Response: *God of hope, accompany us along the way.*

In the sense of mystery, in the wonder that dawns in us as we seek to follow you...

Response: *God of hope, accompany us along the way.*

In the expectation and pain and restlessness that we experience as we follow you...

Response: *God of hope, accompany us along the way.*

When we grow tired and weary, when the burden makes us falter and want to stop...

Response: *God of hope, accompany us along the way.*

When we grow in insight, as your wisdom prompts us when to let go and when to take up...

Response: *God of hope, accompany us along the way.*

When we glimpse your presence and thrill to the sense of your nearness...

Response: *God of hope, accompany us along the way*

Prayers for Parish Groups, Harrington & Kavanagh

### **Concluding Prayer (Leader)**

God of hope,

Like the people of Israel, we also complain,

We too need to learn.

Enliven in us the memory of how you have released us from bondage.

Teach us to rest secure in your presence accompany us on the way.

Inspire us to acknowledge the signs of hope

And to respond to the invitations to new life

That we find along the way.

AMEN

Prayers for Parish Groups, Harrington & Kavanagh

# First Sunday of Lent:

*"You must never despair of human nature."* Mahatma Gandhi

## 1. *Traveling Deeper Into Scripture*

### **Is Genesis 1-11 Myth or History?**

The stories of Genesis 1-11 can disturb a modern historian. They have no particular facts that can be located in a given moment, no eyewitness reports, and no direct connections to other events that are known. If taken literally, the dates the Genesis stories do offer cannot be reconciled with the findings of geology about the age of the earth, nor do the life spans of people conform to the ages of ancient human remains studied by anthropologists. These are more like "model" stories of how things should or must have been in the beginning, and resemble the literary creations of other ancient peoples. To the ancient mind it was a golden age, a primeval time before history began.

Our reading is from the second and third chapters of Genesis. In Genesis 2 the storyteller presents the first couple with the temptation to be like God, wise and immortal. A masterpiece of psychological insight is created here, with the serpent hinting that great things are possible. Both man and woman fall readily despite their clear recognition that God had forbidden them to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They are not pictured as innocent babes in the woods, but as free adults, and so their sin is even greater. Once they have committed the act, they do indeed know something new: *shame and guilt*. It makes them hide their bodies, and even more revealing, it leads them to hide from God. It is a dramatic scene which declares that the causes of sin and shame are rooted in human pride and disobedience, that humans are free to decide, but must bear the consequences, and that we are not gods and must now live a certain distance from God outside God's garden.

*Taken from: Reading the Old Testament, An Introduction, Lawrence Boadt, CSP*

### **Paul's Letter to the Romans: The New Adam models authentic human existence**

"Longer than any other New Testament letter, more reflective in its outlook than any other undisputed letter of Paul's, more calmly reasoned than Galatians in treating the key question of justification and the law, Romans has been the most studied of the apostle's writings – indisputably Paul's theological chef d'oeuvre. With only slight exaggeration one could claim that debates over the main ideas in Romans split Western Christianity. Indeed, shelves could be filled simply with discussions of its key theme of justification – discussions that are often very difficult for beginners."

This week's readings find us in the fifth chapter of Romans. Unlike Adam and Eve, who sought to exalt themselves and to grasp after life where it was not offered to them, Jesus' life and ministry, in obedience to God's salvific will, was marked by humility and by self-giving love and service. His obedience-unto-death not only revealed God's fidelity and love; as the new Adam, the "image of God," par excellence, Jesus also manifested authentic human existence. Jesus' way of being human exposes



the way that characterized the reign of sin and death, living for oneself, as false. Rather, to live as those created in God's image means to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," to take on his fundamental values, attitudes and behavior – in short to love and serve others for their edification and good.

Taken from: *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Raymond E. Brown and *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*

### **The Gospel of Matthew: Temptation and Testing**

The Gospel of Matthew opens the New Testament by setting the local story of Jesus in its worldly historical context. He makes sure that as we read his account of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see the connections with everything that has gone before. "Fulfilled" is one of Matthew's characteristic verbs: such and such happened "that it might be *fulfilled*."

Our reading comes from the fourth chapter of Matthew. In the final element of his preparation for ministry, Jesus relives the experience of his people by undergoing a period of temptation. The essential background to Matthew's account of this episode – better described as a "testing" rather than a temptation - is the forty-year-long wandering of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. This was a time when God probed the hearts of the covenant people to see whether they would be faithful, in the long term, to the covenant just made.

In line with the worldview of the time, the agent of the test is "the devil" (Satan), the leader of the malignant spiritual forces whose rule currently runs in the world to the exclusion of the rule of God. Satan, like Herod, cannot escape being in some sense the instrument of the divine purpose. Jesus will emerge from the test, his mission and his union with the Father more clearly set than ever.

Taken from: *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*

## *2. The Readings*

### **A reading from the Book of Genesis (Gn 2:7-9, 3:1-7)**

The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.

Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the LORD God made various trees grow

that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the LORD God had made.

The serpent asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?"

The woman answered the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'You shall not eat it or even touch it, lest you die.'"

But the serpent said to the woman:

"You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is evil."

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

The Word of the Lord



**A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (Rm 5:12-19)**

Brothers and sisters:

Through one man sin entered the world,  
and through sin, death.

And thus, death came to all men, inasmuch as all sinned—  
for up to the time of the law, sin was in the world,  
though sin is not accounted when there is no law.

But death reigned from Adam to Moses,  
even over those who did not sin  
after the pattern of the trespass of Adam,  
who is the type of the one who was to come.

But the gift is not like the transgression.  
For if by the transgression of the one, the many died,  
how much more did the grace of God  
and the gracious gift of the one man Jesus Christ  
overflow for the many.

And the gift is not like the result of the one who sinned.  
For after one sin there was the judgment that brought condemnation;  
but the gift, after many transgressions, brought acquittal.

For if, by the transgression of the one,  
death came to reign through that one,  
how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace  
and of the gift of justification  
come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, just as through one transgression  
condemnation came upon all,  
so, through one righteous act,  
acquittal and life came to all.  
For just as through the disobedience of the one man  
the many were made sinners,  
so, through the obedience of the one,  
the many will be made righteous.

The Word of the Lord

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (4:1-11)**

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert  
to be tempted by the devil.  
He fasted for forty days and forty nights,  
and afterwards he was hungry.

The tempter approached and said to him,  
"If you are the Son of God,  
command that these stones become loaves of bread."  
He said in reply,  
"It is written:  
*One does not live on bread alone,  
but on every word that comes forth  
from the mouth of God.*"

Then the devil took him to the holy city,  
and made him stand on the parapet of the temple,  
and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.  
For it is written:  
*He will command his angels concerning you  
and with their hands they will support you,  
lest you dash your foot against a stone.*"  
Jesus answered him,  
"Again it is written,  
You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain,  
and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence,  
and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you,  
if you will prostrate yourself and worship me."  
At this, Jesus said to him,  
"Get away, Satan!  
It is written:  
*The Lord, your God, shall you worship  
and him alone shall you serve.*"

Then the devil left him and, behold,  
angels came and ministered to him.

The Gospel of the Lord

### *3. Sharing Questions*

“In the beginning was the Word.” The Bible begins with God speaking all creation, including we humans, into being. It continues with God entering into personalized and complex relationships with us: helping and blessing us, teaching and training us, correcting and disciplining us, loving and saving us.

1. What word or thought in the Scriptures today stands out for me?
2. The eyes of Adam and Eve were opened and they saw that they were naked. When have my eyes been opened to my own shortcomings? Did I experience God’s hand in any way?
3. In the second reading, Paul talks about Jesus’ way of being human. What does that mean to me, and what areas of my life do I feel are closest to that model?
4. When have I been “led into the desert?” What temptation or testing is/was part of my desert experience?
5. What are my hopes for this Lent?

## **Second Sunday of Lent:** *“All that I have seen teaches me to trust the creator for all I have not seen.”* Ralph Waldo Emerson

### ***1. Traveling Deeper Into Scripture***

#### **Genesis’ First Generation Stories**

After relating its lessons from human origins, the Book of Genesis focuses quickly on the heroic ancestors of Israel. In chapter 12, Abraham gives up his ancestral land to acquire another land, and in chapter 22 he gives up his beloved son to receive him in a new way, as a gift. These two events form an arc within which other noteworthy events are arranged in Genesis.

Abraham, or rather Abraham and Sarah, since she is too important to leave out, are intended to be models for all readers, and especially for the exiles being addressed at the time of the writing of Genesis. Abraham was called to leave his country and family to go to a land that the Lord would show him, and live as a sojourner, a non-resident, on land possessed only in promise. Moreover, he and his wife were childless, a condition they had to endure for twenty years. For exiled people who wondered whether they would ever see their homeland again and doubted whether they would continue as a nation, the plight of Abraham and Sarah must have seemed all too real. The couple’s journey to Egypt not long after their arrival in Canaan showed how closely intertwined their personal life was with later Israel who also were forced to go to Egypt because of famine.”

Taken from *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*

#### **Christianity’s Second Generation Stories**

Of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, half have Paul’s name attached, all of them in letter form. By the mid-60’s of the first century, death had come to those who had known Jesus or who had seen the risen Lord. The passing of the first generation of Christians contributed to the production of works of a more permanent nature. Letters/epistles remained an important means of Christian communication. Those not by Paul himself, but in his name, preserved his spirit and authority. Many scholars assign II Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Letters (Titus, I Timothy and II Timothy) to the category of “deuteroPauline” writings, composed in the period 70-100 (or even later) after Paul’s death.

Titus, I Timothy and II Timothy are generally discussed as a group (sometimes with the addition of the Epistle to Philemon) and are given the title pastoral because they are addressed to individuals with pastoral oversight of churches and discuss issues of Christian living, doctrine and leadership.

In our scripture reading Paul, who is experiencing the ordeals of his detention, shares his own motivation of faith and hope that sustains him as he faces death, encouraging Timothy (and us) to do likewise.

Taken from: *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Raymond Brown and *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*

## **The Gospel of Matthew: High Mountain Experience**

A theophany is a mysterious, divine appearance that includes a revelation, such as that given to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-6). The scene in today's Gospel of Jesus with his three disciples on a mountaintop is a theophany that reveals Jesus' hidden identity, both through his transfigured appearance and through God's Word to the disciples. As in other passages in Matthew's Gospel, this scene shows continuity with the Jewish tradition, important for Matthew's audience of Christian Jews. Moses and Elijah, representative of the law and prophets respectively, are signs of continuity. Both of them had ascended a mountain and witnessed a theophany in which God spoke to them (Exodus 24:12-18; 1 Kings 19:8-18).

The transfiguration has been interpreted as an anticipation of Jesus' resurrection or of his end-time coming as Son of Man. It seems best, however, to regard this occurrence on a "high mountain" as one of those moments in the story when the barrier between the heavenly and earthly slips away for a time to allow divinity to shine through.

Taken from: *Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers and Proclaimers of the Word* and *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*

## ***2. The Readings***

### **A reading from the Book of Genesis (Gn 12:1-4a)**

The LORD said to Abram:

"Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk  
and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.

"I will make of you a great nation,  
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,  
so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you  
and curse those who curse you.

All the communities of the earth  
shall find blessing in you."

Abram went as the LORD directed him.

The Word of the Lord

**A reading from the second Letter of St. Paul to Timothy (2 Tm1:8b-10)**

Beloved:

Bear your share of hardship for the gospel  
with the strength that comes from God.  
He saved us and called us to a holy life,  
not according to our works  
but according to his own design  
and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began,  
but now made manifest  
through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus,  
who destroyed death and brought life and immortality  
to light through the gospel.

The Word of the Lord

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 17:1-9)**

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother,  
and led them up a high mountain by themselves.  
And he was transfigured before them;  
his face shone like the sun  
and his clothes became white as light.  
And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them,  
conversing with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus in reply,  
“Lord, it is good that we are here.  
If you wish, I will make three tents here,  
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, behold,  
a bright cloud cast a shadow over them,  
then from the cloud came a voice that said,  
“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;  
listen to him.”

When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate  
and were very much afraid.  
But Jesus came and touched them, saying,  
“Rise, and do not be afraid.”

And when the disciples raised their eyes,  
they saw no one else but Jesus alone.  
As they were coming down from the mountain,  
Jesus charged them,  
“Do not tell the vision to anyone  
until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

The Gospel of the Lord

### *3. Sharing Questions*

We are used to reading books that explain things, or tell us what to do, or inspire or entertain us. But the Bible is different. The Bible is a world of revelation: God revealing to people (then and now) how God works and how to look for divinity without and within.

1. What word or thought in the Scriptures today stands out for me?
2. Abraham was called to leave his country and family to go to a land that the Lord would show him - to live on land possessed only in promise. When have I taken a leap of faith in my life?
3. Do I believe that God has a design for my life?
4. Irish and Scottish culture both refer to “thin places.” Thin places are places of energy - places where the veil between this world and the eternal world is thin. A thin place is where one can walk in two worlds – the worlds are fused together, knitted loosely, where the differences can be discerned, or knitted tightly, where the two worlds become one. Have you every experienced a transfiguration or a “thin place” moment?
5. What does trust in God look like in my life?



**Third Week of Lent:** *“Hope is a slippery thing, sorely tested and hard to come by in this culture.”* Joan Chittister

## *1. Traveling Deeper Into Scripture*

### **The Book of Exodus: Discontent and Direction**

About half of the book of Exodus is a gripping narrative of an obscure and severely brutalized people who are saved from slavery into a life of freedom. The other half is a meticulous, some think tedious, basic instruction and training in living the saved, free life. The story of salvation is not complete without both halves.

Exodus 15-18 sketches several incidents of God’s care that were answered by Israel’s murmuring and rebellion against the hardships of the desert. As the opening quote states, hope can be a slippery thing. In the section of Exodus we read today, tensions have arisen between the people and Moses. This is, above all, a tension between their frustration with hardship and their duty to show gratitude to God for their freedom. At Marah, their grumbling leads to the lesson that God is a healer (15, 25f). At Sin, the dispute over food leads God to reaffirm his goodness as provider and to reinforce the demands that the Sabbath be observed (16, 16-39). At Rephidim, where our passage today takes place, the people’s anger over the lack of water leads to God’s gift of water from the rock, which serves as a reminder of the miracle at the Red Sea. Many of the stories, such as the feeding with manna and quail, or the gift of water from the rock, or the complaints at Marah, are found again as part of the later desert traditions in the Book of Numbers.

Taken from: *The Message*, Eugene H. Peterson,  
*The Catholic Study Bible, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (NAB)*,  
and *Reading the Old Testament, An Introduction*, Lawrence Boadt, CSP

### **Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Justification, Peace and Hope**

As mentioned in week one’s scripture discussion about Romans, Paul writes about justification, among other things, in this letter. Since the sixteenth century great differences have existed between Protestants and Catholics regarding the true nature of justification. However the debates go on this topic, it is fair to say that when a person is justified, that person is in right relationship with God.

In today’s passage Paul writes that peace is the result of being in right relationship with God. This is the peace Jesus bestowed on his followers as his farewell gift (John 14:27). It is not to be confused with the fragile version offered by the world, like the Pax Romana that was the product of imperial oppression and military might. Paul also writes that with that peace comes hope, and hope “does not disappoint.”

Taken from: *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*

## **The Gospel of John: Living Water**

The Gospel of John is the most loved and frequently cited account of the life of Jesus that emerged from the traditions of the early Christian church. John is recognized as the last Gospel. Almost all scholars suggest that it appeared in the late 90's to 100 CE. Also called the Fourth Gospel, it is different from the other Gospels. Jesus speaks in long symbolic discourses, not in short sayings and episodes that end in sayings. The only piece of ethical teaching in the Fourth Gospel is the love command. There are also major differences in the order of events. John pictures Jesus' ministry extending over three Passovers. The cleansing of the Temple comes at the beginning (2:13-22), not at the end of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' death is attributed to the following that he gained when he restored Lazarus to life. Most scholars think that John draws on traditions about Jesus that were independent of those preserved in the Synoptic (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) Gospels.

In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God is presented as speaking the creation into existence. Everything, seen and unseen, is called into being by God's spoken word. In deliberate parallel to the opening words of Genesis, John's Gospel opens with presenting God speaking salvation into existence. This time God's word takes on human form and enters history in the person of Jesus.

In today's Scripture reading, Jesus and his disciples take a route through Samaria. This route was rarely taken by Jews, who normally took a longer and safer route along the other side of the Jordan River to avoid the hostility of the Samaritans and of the bandits who roamed the area. On this route Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman. No other Gospel contains an encounter with a woman at a Samaritan village at a well. The arrival of a person carefully described as a woman who was a Samaritan deliberately highlights the foreignness of the scene that follows. Jesus should not associate with a strange woman in a strange land as she comes to the well to perform her chore of gathering water. And there is more: she is a Samaritan and he is alone with her, as the disciples had left to go buy food in the village. The story of their socially scandalous conversation shows that Jesus' effort to bring her to faith will not be blocked by the obstacle of a far-from-perfect life or the mores of the time.

Taken from: *The Catholic Study Bible*, (NAB)  
*The Paulist Biblical Commentary*, and  
*An Introduction to the New Testament*, Raymond Brown

## *2. The Readings*

### **A reading from the Book of Exodus (Ex 17:3-7)**

In those days, in their thirst for water,  
the people grumbled against Moses,  
saying, "Why did you ever make us leave Egypt?  
Was it just to have us die here of thirst  
with our children and our livestock?"

So Moses cried out to the LORD,  
"What shall I do with this people?  
a little more and they will stone me!"  
The LORD answered Moses,  
"Go over there in front of the people,  
along with some of the elders of Israel,  
holding in your hand, as you go,  
the staff with which you struck the river.  
I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb.  
Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it  
for the people to drink."

This Moses did, in the presence of the elders of Israel.  
The place was called Massah and Meribah,  
because the Israelites quarreled there  
and tested the LORD, saying,  
"Is the LORD in our midst or not?"

The Word of the Lord

### **A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (Rom 5:1-2, 5-8)**

Brothers and sisters:  
Since we have been justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
through whom we have gained access by faith  
to this grace in which we stand,  
and we boast in hope of the glory of God  
because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts  
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.  
For Christ, while we were still helpless,  
died at the appointed time for the ungodly.  
Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person,  
though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die.  
But God proves his love for us  
in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

The Word of the Lord

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (Jn 4:5-42)**

*This Gospel is great storytelling. We suggest that you invite three people to read.*

*1) Narrator, 2) Woman, and 3) Jesus.*

**(Narrator)**

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar,  
near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.

Jacob's well was there.

Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well.

It was about noon.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

Jesus said to her,

**(Jesus)**

"Give me a drink."

**(Narrator)**

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him,

**(Woman)**

"How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?"

**(Narrator)**

- For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.

Jesus answered and said to her,

**(Jesus)**

"If you knew the gift of God  
and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,'  
you would have asked him  
and he would have given you living water."

**(Narrator)**

The woman said to him,

**(Woman)**

"Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep;  
where then can you get this living water?  
Are you greater than our father Jacob,  
who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself  
with his children and his flocks?"

**(Narrator)**

Jesus answered and said to her,

**(Jesus)**

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again;  
but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst;  
the water I shall give will become in him  
a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

**(Narrator)**

The woman said to him,

**(Woman)**

“Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty  
or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus said to her,

**(Jesus)**

“Go call your husband and come back.”

**(Narrator)**

The woman answered and said to him,

**(Woman)**

“I do not have a husband.”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus answered her,

**(Jesus)**

“You are right in saying, ‘I do not have a husband.’  
For you have had five husbands,  
and the one you have now is not your husband.

**(Woman)**

What you have said is true.”

**(Narrator)**

The woman said to him,

**(Woman)**

“Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.  
Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain;  
but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus said to her,

**(Jesus)**

“Believe me, woman, the hour is coming  
when you will worship the Father  
neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.  
You people worship what you do not understand;  
we worship what we understand,  
because salvation is from the Jews.  
But the hour is coming, and is now here,  
when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth;  
and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him.  
God is Spirit, and those who worship him  
must worship in Spirit and truth.”

**(Narrator)**

The woman said to him,

**(Woman)**

“I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ;  
when he comes, he will tell us everything.”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus said to her,

**(Jesus)**

“I am he, the one speaking with you.”

**(Narrator)**

At that moment his disciples returned,  
and were amazed that he was talking with a woman,  
but still no one said, “What are you looking for?”  
or “Why are you talking with her?”  
The woman left her water jar  
and went into the town and said to the people,

**(Woman)**

“Come see a man who told me everything I have done.  
Could he possibly be the Christ?”

**(Narrator)**

They went out of the town and came to him.  
Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat.”  
But he said to them,

**(Jesus)**

“I have food to eat of which you do not know.”

**(Narrator)**

So the disciples said to one another,

“Could someone have brought him something to eat?”  
Jesus said to them,

**(Jesus)**

“My food is to do the will of the one who sent me  
and to finish his work.  
Do you not say, ‘In four months the harvest will be here’?  
I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest.  
The reaper is already receiving payment  
and gathering crops for eternal life,  
so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together.  
For here the saying is verified that ‘One sows and another reaps.’  
I sent you to reap what you have not worked for;  
others have done the work,  
and you are sharing the fruits of their work.”

**(Narrator)**

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him  
because of the word of the woman who testified,  
“He told me everything I have done.”  
When the Samaritans came to him,  
they invited him to stay with them;  
and he stayed there two days.  
Many more began to believe in him because of his word,  
and they said to the woman,  
“We no longer believe because of your word;  
for we have heard for ourselves,  
and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.”

**(Narrator)** The Gospel of the Lord



### *3. Sharing Questions*

Our world is decidedly not an ideal world. Suffering and injustice and ugliness are not purged from the world in which God works and loves and saves. Nothing is glossed over. God works patiently and deeply, but often in hidden ways, in the mess of our humanity and history.

1. What word or thought in the Scriptures today stands out for me?
2. In the reading from Exodus the people ask themselves, "Is the Lord in our midst, or not?" When have you had an experience that made you want to cry this out?
3. What is hope to me, and what do I most hope for in my life today?
4. In the Gospel we hear that "Jews had nothing in common with Samaritans." What individual, community or people do I see myself as having nothing in common with? What can I learn from Jesus' approach to the Samaritan woman that can help me open my mind and heart to them?
5. Even though the Samaritan woman was an outcast of the village (having to draw her water at mid-day, when she could be alone), when she tells the villagers about her encounter with Jesus, they are attentive, listen, and believe her. What qualities in her make this possible?

**Fourth Sunday of Lent:** *“You wouldn’t believe what once or twice I have seen. I’ll just tell you this: only if there are angels in your head will you ever, possibly see one.”* Mary Oliver

## *1. Traveling Deeper Into Scripture*

### **The First Book of Samuel: Man does not see as God sees**

The stories of the books of Samuel revolve around three characters: Samuel, Saul and David. Through most of 1 Samuel, the story moves toward the eventual accession of David to the throne of Israel. In 2 Samuel the story describes the clear move toward religious and political centralization in Jerusalem. The books also reveal the political and religious opposition to the attempt to center all power in the Davidic Dynasty and in Jerusalem. The story of Israel as it establishes a monarchy is a fascinating tale of a social, political, and economic innovation, which could advance only by overcoming the religious constraints that flowed from the belief that the only king of Israel was the Lord.

First Samuel does not hesitate to recount the schemes that David contrived to become king: his political moves, his marriages, and his career as a guerrilla and as a Philistine mercenary. But God does not see as man sees. Despite this, the book affirms David as God’s chosen leader. Samuel would have anointed another of Jesse’s sons, but David was God’s sovereign choice, and the anointing served to commit God to David. The spirit of the Lord that seized David and never departed from him confirmed this commitment.

Taken from *The Catholic Study Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (NAB)

### **Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians: God’s Marvelous Light**

The Acts of the Apostles recounts that Paul’s mission in Ephesus lasted about three years (20:31). The investment in Ephesus was strategic, as it was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire, numbering about two hundred thousand, and was a center of commerce. It was the capital of the Roman province of Asia (the western part of modern day Turkey.)

Although no writer of the early Church expressed any doubt that the apostle Paul wrote Ephesians, during the last two centuries scholars have raised reasonable questions about whether Ephesians came directly from Paul. They point to differences in vocabulary, style, and theology between Ephesians and earlier letters and to similarities with Colossians that suggest that a later author may have imitated and adapted the letter. They suggest that an anonymous disciple wrote Ephesians fifteen to twenty-five years after Paul’s death in order to recall his teachings and apply it to new circumstances. From the perspective of Christian faith, whether or not Paul wrote Ephesians does not change its status as inspired Scripture or make a great difference in how it is interpreted. According to Catholic scholar, Frank Matera, “Whether or not Ephesians was written by Paul, the fundamental task of New Testament theologians in regard to this letter remains essentially the same: to identify and clarify the letter’s

theology, noting and explaining, when possible, its theological development in comparison with other Pauline writings.”

In today’s reading the imagery draws on biblical tradition as well as common human experience. Light and darkness in the Bible, other literature, and human thought is symbolic of day and night, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, and divine and demonic. Having been created anew, the baptized are to “live as children of light.” Paul concludes with a baptism hymn probably well known to the communities he addresses. In the baptism celebration, a lighted candle signifies the new light of Christ given to the believer. No longer asleep in a time of darkness, they are now awake in the light of day.

Taken from: *Ephesians*, Peter S. Williamson,  
*The Catholic Study Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (NAB)  
*The Paulist Biblical Commentary*,

### **The Gospel of John: I was blind and now I see**

“Chapter 9 of John’s Gospel, describing how the man born blind came to sight is the masterpiece of Johannine dramatic narrative, so carefully crafted that not a single word is wasted. “The light of the world” motif and the reference to the pool of Siloam provide a loose relationship with the Tabernacles feast that evidently has kept Jesus in Jerusalem.

The man born blind is more than an individual; he has developed as a spokesperson for a particular type of faith-encounter with Jesus. The Samaritan woman exemplified the obstacles encountered in coming to believe in Jesus on the first encounter. The blind man, having washed in the waters of Siloam (the name is interpreted as “the one sent,” a Johannine designation for Jesus), exemplifies one who is enlightened on the first encounter, but comes to see who Jesus really is only later – after undergoing trials and being cast out of the synagogue.

This could be seen as a message to Johannine Christians who have had a similar experience, encouraging them that through their trials they have been given the opportunity to come to a much more profound faith than when they first encountered Christ.”

*An Introduction to the New Testament*, Raymond E. Brown

## 2. *The Readings*

### **A reading from the first book of Samuel (1Sm: 16:1b-6-7, 10-13a)**

The LORD said to Samuel:

“Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way.  
I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem,  
for I have chosen my king from among his sons.”

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice,  
Samuel looked at Eliab and thought,  
“Surely the LORD’s anointed is here before him.”

But the LORD said to Samuel:

“Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature,  
because I have rejected him.  
Not as man sees does God see,  
because man sees the appearance  
but the LORD looks into the heart.”

In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel,  
but Samuel said to Jesse,

“The LORD has not chosen any one of these.”

Then Samuel asked Jesse,

“Are these all the sons you have?”

Jesse replied,

“There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said to Jesse,

“Send for him;

we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here.”

Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them.

He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold  
and making a splendid appearance.

The LORD said,

“There—anoint him, for this is the one!”

Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand,

anointed David in the presence of his brothers;

and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.

The Word of the Lord

**A reading for the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians (Eph 5:9-14)**

Brothers and sisters:  
You were once darkness,  
but now you are light in the Lord.

Live as children of light,  
for light produces every kind of goodness  
and righteousness and truth.  
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.  
Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness;  
rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention  
the things done by them in secret;  
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,  
for everything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore, it says:  
“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will give you light.”

The Word of the Lord

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (Jn 9:1-41)**

*Like last week, this Gospel is great storytelling. We suggest that you invite four people to read. 1) Narrator, 2) Jesus, 3) Man born blind, and 4) Pharisee*

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**(Narrator)**

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.  
His disciples asked him,  
“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,  
that he was born blind?”  
Jesus answered,

**(Jesus)**

“Neither he nor his parents sinned;  
it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.

We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day.  
Night is coming when no one can work.  
While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

**(Narrator)**

When he had said this, he spat on the ground  
and made clay with the saliva,  
and smeared the clay on his eyes,  
and said to him,

**(Jesus)**

“Go wash in the Pool of Siloam”

**(Narrator)**

—which means Sent—.

So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said,

“Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?”

Some said, “It is, “

but others said, “No, he just looks like him.”

**(Man)**

He said, “I am.”

**(Narrator)**

So they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?”

He replied,

**(Man)**

“The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’

So I went there and washed and was able to see.”

**(Narrator)**

And they said to him,

**(Man)**

“Where is he?”

**(Narrator)**

He said,

**(Man)**

“I don’t know.”

**(Narrator)**

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees.

Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a Sabbath.

So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.

He said to them,

**(Man)**

“He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.”

**(Narrator)**

So some of the Pharisees said,

**(Pharisee)**

“This man is not from God,  
because he does not keep the Sabbath.”

**(Narrator)**

But others said,

**(Pharisee)**

“How can a sinful man do such signs?”

**(Narrator)**

And there was a division among them  
So they said to the blind man again,

**(Pharisee)**

“What do you have to say about him,  
since he opened your eyes?”

**(Narrator)**

He said

**(Man)**

“He is a prophet.”

**(Narrator)**

Now the Jews did not believe  
that he had been blind and gained his sight  
until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight.  
They asked them,  
“Is this your son, who you say was born blind?  
How does he now see?”

His parents answered and said,

“We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.  
We do not know how he sees now,  
nor do we know who opened his eyes.  
Ask him, he is of age;  
he can speak for himself.”

His parents said this because they were afraid  
of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed  
that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ,



he would be expelled from the synagogue.  
For this reason his parents said,  
“He is of age; question him.”

So a second time they called the man who had been blind  
and said to him,

**(Pharisee)**

“Give God the praise!  
We know that this man is a sinner.”

**(Narrator)**

He replied,

**(Man)**

“If he is a sinner, I do not know.  
One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.”

**(Narrator)**

So they said to him,

**(Pharisee)**

“What did he do to you?  
How did he open your eyes?”

**(Narrator)**

He answered them,

**(Man)**

“I told you already and you did not listen.  
Why do you want to hear it again?  
Do you want to become his disciples, too?”

**(Narrator)**

They ridiculed him and said,

**(Pharisee)**

“You are that man’s disciple;  
we are disciples of Moses!  
We know that God spoke to Moses,  
but we do not know where this one is from.”

**(Narrator)**

The man answered and said to them,

**(Man)**

“This is what is so amazing,  
that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes.  
We know that God does not listen to sinners,  
but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him.  
It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind.  
If this man were not from God,  
he would not be able to do anything.”

**(Narrator)**

They answered and said to him,

**(Pharisee)**

“You were born totally in sin,  
and are you trying to teach us?”

**(Narrator)**

Then they threw him out.  
When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out,  
he found him and said,

**(Jesus)**

Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

**(Narrator)**

He answered and said,

**(Man)**

“Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus said to him,

**(Jesus)**

“You have seen him,  
the one speaking with you is he.”

**(Narrator)**

He said,

**(Man)**

“I do believe, Lord,”

**(Narrator)**

and he worshiped him.  
Then Jesus said,

**(Jesus)**

“I came into this world for judgment,  
so that those who do not see might see,  
and those who do see might become blind.”

**(Narrator)**

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this  
and said to him,

**(Pharisee)**

“Surely we are not also blind, are we?”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus said to them,

**(Jesus)**

“If you were blind, you would have no sin;  
but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.

**(Narrator)** The Gospel of the Lord

### *3. Sharing Questions*

As Yogi Berra said, "Sometimes you can see a whole lot of things just by looking." Unfortunately, the opposite can also be true. We do a whole lot of looking without really seeing much. Seeing implies more than having good eyesight. Our eyes can be wide open and we can be seeing very little." Taken from: Ronald Rolheiser O.M.I.

1. What word or thought in the Scriptures today stands out for me?
2. In the first reading, David is an unlikely hero. Not even important enough to have initially been called to be present at this momentous family occasion. Anointing had to wait on David's arrival and on God's timing and direction. Do you ever find yourself "waiting" on God?
3. In Ephesians, having faith is compared to being in the light. What times, experiences or rituals help you experience light in your faith life?
4. Share an experience you have had of feeling as if you had been blind and, suddenly, you had a graced moment and saw things differently?
5. In Week One we read the story of how sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's decision to eat forbidden fruit. Five to six thousand years later, we have the story in this week's Gospel of the man born blind, with the disciples assuming that his blindness is a result of either his parents or his own sin. Four hundred years later St Augustine explained the concept of original sin in depth, and fifteen hundred years later it became part of Catholic doctrine at the Council of Trent. What do you believe about original sin?

## ***Fifth Sunday of Lent:***

*“Every moment of your life is a second chance.”* Rick Price

### ***1. Traveling Deeper Into Scripture***

#### **The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel: Prophet in Exile**

Ezekiel’s’ complex character makes him one of the most interesting figures in Israelite prophecy. To understand Ezekiel’s message, one must go back a century and a half before Ezekiel to the earliest writing prophets – Amos, Hosea, Micah, and first Isaiah. What provoked these individuals to initiate a new religious movement and write down their prophecies and publicize them for the widest possible audience? Though we will probably never understand the reasons fully, two factors played a major role: 1) the prophets’ convictions that God’s relationship to Israel had reached a crisis point; and 2) the fact that Israel faced a new kind of enemy, a superpower (Assyria) against which it could not defend itself.

Ezekiel became a prophet in Babylon – the first prophet to receive the call to prophesy outside of the Holy Land. As one of the exiles deported by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 bcc, his first task was to prepare his fellow countrymen living in Babylon for the destruction of Jerusalem, which they had believed to be inviolable. In our reading today the graves suggest a reference to resurrection. They also represent the lands of exile and Diaspora in which this dead people (the House of Israel) now live.

*Taken from: The Catholic Study Bible, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (NAB), and The Paulist Biblical Commentary*

#### **Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Indwelling Spirit**

In the first verse of the reading from Romans, Paul contrasts living in the flesh with living in the spirit. As he juxtaposes flesh (*sarx*) and spirit (*pneuma*), Paul uses terms that have more than one meaning. From one perspective, Jesus is described as being “in the flesh,” (Heb 5:7), and similarly in John’s Gospel, Jesus is the Word who “became flesh” (1:14). In both passages being in the flesh simply means being fully human, one who shares in the human condition.

At other times, flesh has a negative connotation, indicative of a person’s orientation toward sin. Sins of the flesh, though sometimes misinterpreted as referring only to sins of a physical or sexual nature, are actually much broader. As described by Paul, they include rivalry and jealousy and other selfish actions and attitudes (Galatians 5:19-21). Here in Romans, Paul is using this second meaning of flesh, having already given a brief summary in the verse preceding it, “the concern of the flesh is hostility toward God; it does not submit to the law of God, nor can it.” According to today’s reading, those who live in the flesh of selfish actions and attitudes do not belong to Christ. Taken from: *Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers and Proclaimers of the Word*

## **The Gospel of John: Second Chances**

Although the story of Lazarus prepares the way for the death and resurrection of Jesus, the two events are different. Lazarus's death and resuscitation drive the action, but what unfolds across this section of the Gospel emphasizes the faith journeys of Jesus' friends, Mary and Martha, as he challenges them to see in him not the culmination of a historical religious system, but the perfection of life in the Spirit through believing in God.

When Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, he offers Lazarus a second chance at life. As a result, many come to believe in Jesus. Jesus is always offering second chances.

Taken from: *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*  
and *At Home with the Word, 2017*

## *2. The Readings*

### **A reading from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel (Ez 37:12-14)**

Thus says the Lord GOD:

O my people, I will open your graves

and have you rise from them,

and bring you back to the land of Israel.

Then you shall know that I am the LORD,

when I open your graves and have you rise from them,

O my people!

I will put my spirit in you that you may live,

and I will settle you upon your land;

thus you shall know that I am the LORD.

I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

The Word of the Lord

### **A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (Rom 8:8-11)**

Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh;

on the contrary, you are in the spirit,

if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Whoever 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 alive because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,

the one who raised Christ from the dead

will give life to your mortal bodies also,

through his Spirit dwelling in you.

The Word of the Lord

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**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (Jn 11:1-45)**

*This Lent's Gospels are great storytelling. We suggest that you invite four people to read. 1) Narrator, 2) Martha/Mary, 3) Jesus, and 4) Disciple*

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**(Narrator)**

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany,  
the village of Mary and her sister Martha.  
Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil  
and dried his feet with her hair;  
it was her brother Lazarus who was ill.  
So the sisters sent word to him saying,

**(Martha)**

"Master, the one you love is ill."

**(Narrator)**

When Jesus heard this he said,

**(Jesus)**

"This illness is not to end in death,  
but is for the glory of God,  
that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

**(Narrator)**

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.  
So when he heard that he was ill,  
he remained for two days in the place where he was.  
Then after this he said to his disciples,

**(Jesus)**

"Let us go back to Judea."

**(Narrator)**

The disciples said to him,

**(Disciple)**

"Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you,  
and you want to go back there?"  
Jesus answered,

**(Jesus)**

"Are there not twelve hours in a day?  
If one walks during the day, he does not stumble,  
because he sees the light of this world.  
But if one walks at night, he stumbles,



because the light is not in him.”  
He said this, and then told them,  
“Our friend Lazarus is asleep,  
but I am going to awaken him.”

**(Narrator)**

So the disciples said to him,

**(Disciple)**

“Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved.”

**(Narrator)**

But Jesus was talking about his death,  
while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep.  
So then Jesus said to them clearly,

**(Jesus)**

“Lazarus has died.  
And I am glad for you that I was not there,  
that you may believe.  
Let us go to him.”

**(Narrator)**

So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples,

**(Disciple)**

“Let us also go to die with him.”

**(Narrator)**

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus  
had already been in the tomb for four days.

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away.

And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary  
to comfort them about their brother.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,  
she went to meet him;  
but Mary sat at home.

Martha said to Jesus,

**(Martha)**

“Lord, if you had been here,  
my brother would not have died.  
But even now I know that whatever you ask of God,  
God will give you.”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus said to her,

**(Jesus)**

“Your brother will rise.”

**(Narrator)**

Martha said to him,

**(Martha)**

“I know he will rise,  
in the resurrection on the last day.”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus told her,

**(Jesus)**

“I am the resurrection and the life;  
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.  
Do you believe this?”

**(Narrator)**

She said to him,

**(Martha)**

“Yes, Lord.  
I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,  
the one who is coming into the world.”

**(Narrator)**

When she had said this,  
she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying,

**(Martha)**

“The teacher is here and is asking for you.”

**(Narrator)**

As soon as she heard this,  
she rose quickly and went to him.  
For Jesus had not yet come into the village,  
but was still where Martha had met him.  
So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her  
saw Mary get up quickly and go out,  
they followed her,  
presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.  
When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him,  
she fell at his feet and said to him,

**(Mary)**

“Lord, if you had been here,  
my brother would not have died.”

**(Narrator)**

When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping,  
he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said,

**(Jesus)**

“Where have you laid him?”

**(Narrator)**

They said to him, “Sir, come and see.”  
And Jesus wept.  
So the Jews said, “See how he loved him.”  
But some of them said,  
“Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man  
have done something so that this man would not have died?”

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb.  
It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.  
Jesus said,

**(Jesus)**

“Take away the stone.”

**(Narrator)**

Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him,

**(Martha)**

“Lord, by now there will be a stench;  
he has been dead for four days.”

**(Narrator)**

Jesus said to her,

**(Jesus)**

“Did I not tell you that if you believe  
you will see the glory of God?”

**(Narrator)**

So they took away the stone.  
And Jesus raised his eyes and said,

**(Jesus)**

“Father, I thank you for hearing me.  
I know that you always hear me;  
but because of the crowd here I have said this,  
that they may believe that you sent me.”

**(Narrator)**

And when he had said this,  
He cried out in a loud voice,

**(Jesus)**

“Lazarus, come out!”

**(Narrator)**

The dead man came out,  
tied hand and foot with burial bands,  
and his face was wrapped in a cloth.  
So Jesus said to them,

**(Jesus)**

“Untie him and let him go.”

**(Narrator)**

Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary  
and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

The Gospel of the Lord

### *3. Sharing Questions*

The Bible is not an escape from reality but a plunge into a deeper reality – a sacrificial but altogether better way of living. What we find here is a connection between the Word Read and the Word Lived. The most important question we ask as we read is not “What does it mean?” but “How can I live it?”

1. What word or thought in the Scriptures today stands out for me?
2. How would you describe the indwelling of the Spirit in your life experience?
3. Resurrection moments are those in which new life arises from where we formerly saw only loss, pain or death. Resurrection moments can be life changing experiences or small day-to-day events. When have you experienced a resurrection moment?
4. We very seldom think of Jesus as weeping, yet in John’s Gospel, Jesus weeps over the loss of his dead friend. If Jesus knows that he will soon resuscitate Lazarus, why do you think he weeps?
5. Next week is Holy Week, and then Easter. What are your hopes for each?

“The resurrection tells us  
it is never too late.  
Every so often  
we will be surprised.  
We must believe  
that the stone will be rolled back,  
and we must be ready  
to poke out our timid heads,  
take off the linen bindings of death,  
and walk free for a time,  
breathing resurrection air.”

Ronald Rolheiser O.M.I.

**HAPPY EASTER!**