

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

I shall put my spirit in you and you will live. *First Reading*

With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption. *Psalms*

The Spirit of God has made his home in you. *Second Reading*

'Unbind him, let him go free!' *Gospel*

Father,
help us to be like Christ your Son,
who loved the world and died for our salvation.

Inspire us by his love,
guide us by his example.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:

Ezekiel 37: 12–14; Psalm 129 (130); Romans 8: 8–11; John 11: 1–45



'Lazarus,
come
forth!'

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



Fifth Sunday of Lent
Year A
29th March 2020

With the Lord there is
Mercy and Redemption

Although our liturgy brings us nearer this week to the climax of Passiontide, our readings are full of hope and life.

In our **First Reading**, the people of Israel are exiled in Babylon. The prophet tells them that God will put a new spirit in them and raise them from their graves.

The **Psalms** is a prayer of trust in God, who is full of mercy and compassion. He will redeem Israel.

In the **Second Reading**, St Paul tells us that because we have received the Spirit of Christ, then 'he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies.'

The **Gospel** unites all these themes of mercy and trust, of death and life, of redemption and resurrection, in the miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. This great sign of Jesus being 'the resurrection and the life' leads us into the coming weeks.

As we contemplate these readings this week, may we draw closer to our Lord and accompany him as he sets his face towards Jerusalem.

Opening Prayer

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.

Psalm 129 (130)

R./ With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice
O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?
But with you is found forgiveness:
for this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord,
I count on his word.
My soul is longing for the Lord
More than watchman for daybreak.
(Let the watchman count on daybreak
and Israel on the Lord.)

Because with the Lord there is mercy
and fullness of redemption,
Israel he will redeem
from all its iniquity.

How do I feel as I settle to pray today? Whatever my feelings, I know the Lord accepts me as I am. I place myself in his hands and ask him to help me pray.

I take the psalm. I read it slowly a couple of times.

Where do I find that it answers my own feelings of despondency, guilt ... of hope, trust, longing and waiting ...?

The psalmist seems to suggest that I 'cry' to the Lord, whatever my situation. Is it the case? How do I speak to the Lord?

I may ask him to increase my faith and confidence in his mercy and forgiveness. His saving love is unconditional.

I pray that others may come to realise this too, and be drawn out 'of the depths'.

I speak to the Lord, and I end my prayer in the spirit of gratitude.

Gospel John 11: 1–45 (abbreviated)

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. When Martha heard that Jesus had come, she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother,' said Jesus to her, 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.'

Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection. 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?' 'Yes, Lord,' she said, 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who has come into this world.'

Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I know 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.'

Then he cried out 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, let him go free.'

As I prepare to pray, I take the time to relax into God's presence, breathing in his life and love.

When I am ready, I turn to this Gospel. I may prefer to take the whole text from my Bible or Missal and slowly absorb the drama and confrontation involved ... or I may stay with this abbreviated text. What aspect strikes me most?

As I place myself in the scene, with whom or what do I identify most — with Martha's faith, Jesus's anguish, the doubtful crowd ...?

In what ways do I myself need to be unbound?

Or can I help others to be more free?

I speak to the Lord from my heart, and end with an 'Our Father'.