

Church of the Divine Love

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 26, 2023 10:15 A.M.

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence

Alleluias are omitted during Lent

Prayer before worship – on insert

A PENITENTIAL ORDER

Processional Hymn #

Opening Acclamation for Lent page 351

The Decalogue page 350

The Confession page 353

THE WORD OF GOD

Kyrie page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

Psalm 130

Second Lesson: **Romans 8:6-11**

Gradual Hymn #

Gospel: **John 11:1-45**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People & General Confession – on insert

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn #

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer A page 361

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 362

Hymn during Consecration – on insert

The Lord’s Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn #

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Prayer for Peace – on insert

Prayer of St. Francis page 833

Sermon Sunday March 26, 2023

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Lazarus is dead,” Jesus tells the disciples.

It’s not hard to imagine the questions that might be running through the minds of the disciples and the hearts of Mary and Martha. They are the same kind of questions I have heard being asked and I have asked myself over the last several years as this world and our surrounding community endured tragic

accidents, deaths, and funerals that came way too soon. They are the same kind of questions we ask ourselves and each other whenever life is interrupted and changed in ways we do not want. They are the same kind of questions we ask when circumstances show us just how difficult, fragile, and beautiful life really is.

Why? How could this happen? What's next for me? Is this an ending or a beginning? Could it be both? How do I move forward? How do I make sense of what has happened? What will life be like now? Why didn't it work out the way I wanted? What could or should I have done differently? Is there life after this? Why didn't God do something? Every one of you could add to this list. We all have our questions, thousands of them. The ultimate question, the one that lies behind and grounds all our other questions, is the one God asks Ezekiel. "Mortal, can these bones live again?" That's what we are really asking. That's what I want to know. Don't you? That question is the valley that cuts through the center of our lives. And yet, it's not a simple yes or no kind of question. Neither is it answered once and for all. It's a question we live with and ask over and over. What is the valley that cuts through center of your life? What questions did you ask when the Lazarus of your life died? What questions are you asking today?

Every time life sets before me those kinds of questions I am reminded, once again, that I live with more questions than answers, and the answers I do have no longer seem to carry the weight and authority they once did. Our lives are filled with unanswered questions. My experience is that the unanswered questions of life tend to leave us disappointed; disappointed in life itself, in ourselves, in another, or sometimes in God. Disappointment is wrapped up in and bound by our unmet expectations. That's where Mary and Martha are in today's gospel (John 11:1-45). They are disappointed. "Lord, if you have been here, my brother would not have died," they both say separately to Jesus. Even the crowd that follows Mary is disappointed. "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" they ask. I know that disappointment and I'll bet you do too. We want answers, explanations, and understanding. But maybe there aren't any; at least, not the kind most of us want. Maybe life itself is an unanswered question and maybe that's how we are to live it.

Jesus does not offer answers or explanations to Mary and Martha, or to us. Instead, he uses our disappointment as an agency for transformation. Jesus seems to know that disappointment is inescapable, necessary, and even a faithful response to life's circumstances. He neither criticizes nor ridicules Martha and Mary for their disappointment. Instead, he uses it as an opening and entry point into their lives. There's something honest, heartfelt, and real about Mary and Martha's words of disappointment to Jesus. They are offering and making themselves available to him. They rethink what they know about life, death, and resurrection. They risk smelling the stench of death. They are walking in that valley that cuts through the center of their lives.

To attempt to insulate ourselves from disappointment and demand once and for all kind of answers to life's questions is to close ourselves to the vulnerabilities that make possible real life, love, intimacy, and

relationships with God or with another. It limits what we are willing to risk giving or receiving. It leaves the stone in place over Lazarus' tomb, and refuses to consider God's question to Ezekiel. While we might want to escape our disappointments, life wants to use them. Life will not waste our disappointments, and Jesus always stands in the middle of life. Disappointment calls into question our assumptions about life, ourselves, each other, and God. Disappointment asks us to reassess ourselves and our inner world. It is the first step in freeing us from misguided assumptions. It breaks old patterns of seeing and relating that have become hardened and less than life sustaining. It opens our eyes to a deeper way of seeing. Jesus uses our disappointment in the unanswered questions of life to invite us to a larger foundational reality than what we create for ourselves and project onto the world. Isn't that what he's doing with Mary and Martha? "I am the resurrection and life." "Take away the stone." "Did I not tell you that you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" "Lazarus come out." "Unbind him and let him go." With those words Jesus is holding before Martha and Mary the valley that cuts through the center of their lives. "Mortal, can these bones live again?"

The great question before us (and Mary and Martha) is whether we experience our disappointment as an opportunity for seeing and engaging our lives and world in new, different, and life-giving ways or whether we experience it only as a wound that makes us retreat from further participation. It's a question we answer every day. It's a question Jesus answered throughout his life. Don't think that Jesus did not know disappointment. He surely did. He knew disappointment in the death of Lazarus, the crucifixion, Peter's drawn sword and violence, Judas' betrayal, the disciples sleeping in the garden, the way his Father's house had been turned into a den of robbers, his disciples arguing about who was the greatest, the disciples' misunderstanding of who he is, the world's refusal to receive him, and in a myriad of other ways.

Every disappointment held before him, as it does for us, the choice between engaging or retreating from the world and our lives. He refused to be stopped by his disappointments. Instead, he used them as entry points into our lives. They became points of identification with us. His every disappointment become one more step deeper into the valley that cuts through the center of our lives. So let me ask you again. What is the valley that cuts through the center of your life? Whatever it is it's a place through which Jesus has walked and shown the way forward. It is not the dark place we often think it is. It's an aperture into the light, a path that opens to new life, a clearer way of seeing, a truer sense of ourselves, and a deeper experience of Christ. It becomes the place of our unbinding and being let go.

In this valley "the question mark of life becomes God's exclamation point: the exclamation points of love, the exclamation points of life and light, the exclamation point of mercy and forgiveness, the exclamation point of wisdom, beauty, and generosity, the exclamation point of hope, healing, and compassion, and ultimately, the exclamation point of God's "yes" to you and your life. "Mortal, can these bones live again?" The answer to that question echoes throughout the valley that cuts through the center of your life. Yes, they can! Yes, they do! Yes, they will! **Amen!**

Prayers of the People and General Confession, from

**“We Are Complicit:
The Episcopal Diocese Of New York Apologizes
For The Endurance of Slavery”**

Saturday, March 25th, 2023

Noon (EST)

Cathedral of St. John the Divine

To be used by congregations in the Diocese on March 26, 2023

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Intercessor Gracious and Eternal God, on this day when we presume to ask forgiveness for the sin of slavery and its lasting effects, we bring before your Almighty throne our prayers, trusting in your love and mercy for all your children.

Intercessor Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer,

People And let our cry come unto you.

We pray for the Universal Church, that Beloved Community you desire us to become. Grant that we may love all your people and as you love us. Grant that we may serve you, each other, and the world as agents of your love, peace, justice, truth, integrity and transformation.

Intercessor Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer,

People And let our cry come unto you.

We pray for all who are in pain and trouble and all who suffer from injustice and oppression of any kind. On this day of remembrance and apology, we pray especially for the pain and suffering of enslaved people and their descendants, abolitionists and their descendants, and for the indifference experienced by

the enslavers. We ask that we, their descendants, may continue to work for compassion, justice, truth and love in your holy name.

Intercessor Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer,

People And let our cry come unto you.

We pray for our nation and those in authority, that we may truly appreciate the abundance and power you have given us. Turn our hearts from greed and selfishness, Oh God. Help us to use our power and wealth to fulfill our founding principles, that all are created equal, and deserve life, liberty and the ability to pursue happiness. Keep us ever vigilant, so that we do not construct new forms of slavery with different victims whom we consider to be less than ourselves.

Intercessor Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer,

People And let our cry come unto you.

Intercessor Gracious and Eternal God, we bring before your Almighty throne those stripped of dignity and humanity in our world through poverty, homelessness, hunger, nakedness, and every insensitivity. Help us in all our actions, led by the movement and power of The Holy Spirit, to see in all human beings, especially the marginalized, your image, and enable us to repair our global neglect.

Intercessor Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer,

People And let our cry come unto you.

Intercessor We pray that you lead us all to do justice and embrace kindness and compassion in our communities. We cannot make peace with any forms of oppression. Therefore we ask you to deliver us from our fears and willful ignorance to do the right thing. When we choose to ignore egregious incidents that plague our communities, urge us to ask ourselves why. Free us from our

own paralysis to find our internal daring determination to take action, to listen intently, speak out responsibly, and get involved in the concerns and needs of those beyond ourselves. Let us live to build and strengthen our communities so that we may live together with care, equity and justice.

Intercessor Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer,

People And let our cry come unto you.

Intercessor We pray for those who have died. We pray especially for those who have suffered injustice, oppression, fear, horror, loneliness and angst, and who never had a chance in their torment to realize a moment of peace, let alone justice. May their souls have found the peace of God which passes all understanding.

Intercessor Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer,

People And let our cry come unto you.

Intercessor We pray for congregations in the Diocese. Inspire us, O God, to discern the next step and the next and the next, and then give us grace to implement them, so that we may walk with you. Opportunity for people to offer specific petitions for their congregations' work towards reparations and healing, silently or aloud.

Intercessor Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer,

People And let our cry come unto you.

Intercessor O God of Love, Power and Justice, who wills the freedom and fulfillment of all your children, we thank you for the constancy of your loving kindness and tender mercies toward us. Strengthen us to face reality with

compassion and the spirit of sacrifice, and to withstand the rigor of tough times in the anticipation of a bright side beyond the struggle. Inspire, empower, and sustain us until we reach the mountaintop and see that future for which our hearts yearn; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

GENERAL CONFESSION

Bishop Forgive us for rushing to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Forgive us for rushing to offer a bandage, when gaping wounds require surgery and complete reconstruction.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Forgive us for offering false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Forgive us for speaking of reconciliation without speaking of reparations and restoration, or how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Forgive us for rushing past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child...someone's beloved son, someone's beloved daughter.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Forgive us for valuing property over people; let us not protect material objects while human lives hang in the balance.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Forgive us for valuing a false peace over a righteous justice.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Forgive us for being afraid to sit with the ugliness, messiness, and the pain that is life in community together.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Forgive us for offering clichés to the grieving, those whose hearts are being torn asunder.

People Have mercy on us, Lord.

Bishop Let us mourn Black and Brown men and women and children, those killed extrajudicially in the US every 28 hours.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop Let us lament the loss of a teenager, dead at the hands of a police

officer who described him as a demon.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop Let us weep at a criminal justice system, which is neither blind nor just.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop Let us call for the mourning men and the wailing women, those willing to rend their garments of privilege and ease, and sit in the ashes of this nation's original sin.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of neighbors and friends.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop Let those of us who hold power over others decrease, so that our brothers and sisters who live on the underside of history may increase.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop Let us listen to the shattering glass & let us smell the purifying fires, for it is the language of the unheard.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop GOD, in your mercy, show us our own complicity in injustice. Convict us for our indifference. Forgive us when we have remained silent. Equip us with a zeal for righteousness. Never let us grow accustomed or acclimated to unrighteousness.

People Accept our repentance, Lord.

Bishop God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live, has given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. He pardons and absolves all those who truly repent, and with sincere hearts believe his holy Gospel. Therefore we beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Sources:

General Confession “A litany for those not ready for healing”, adapted for this service, written by Rev. Dr. Yolanda Pierce, Princeton Seminary

Closing collect for Prayers of the People, adapted from a prayer by James Forbes Jr. in *Conversations with God, Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans*, James Washington, ed.

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Give to all who suffer the refreshing waters of your compassion and healing.
Make them dwell in the safety of your care even in the midst of all that troubles
them. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella	Lourdes S.	Bob Curley
John Mulligan	Arlene Goodenough	Celeste
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Gabriel
Barbara Stinson	Michael & Family	Warren
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Anthony
Mo (Rachael)	Bill Conklin Sr.	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Ciara	Robert Sweat	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
People of Haiti	Christopher & Family	Julia
Mary & Family	People of Ukraine	Tim
Nathan Treadwell	Vincent	Art
Margaret	Kaylee	Judy
Phil Ryder		

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

	This week	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Deb Giordano	Jess Berbeck
Coffee Hour	Nolans	Berbeck

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn
but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that
all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince
of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions
and glory, now and for ever. Amen

