



CELEBRATING AT HOME
5TH SUNDAY IN LENT

Let him go free (John 11:1-45)



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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

We stand in your presence, O God;
and we praise your holy name.

May your mercy be upon us, O Lord;
as we place our trust in you.

Show us your mercy and love;
and grant us your salvation.

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God to be the Church,
the Body of Christ in this world.
We are not a building, but a people,
gathered and grounded in
the Word of God,
the love of Christ,
and the unity of the Holy Spirit.

We were dead once,
but now we are alive in Christ!

Like Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead,
we long to be free!

As for Lazarus long ago, Christ now says to us:
"This will not end in death, but in life!"

When we feel trapped by death,
bound by fear, closed to life:
Give us life, O God - unbind us and set us free!

Eternal God, your love and grace
unbind us and set us free.
Bring us to life in Christ.

Eternal God, you fill us with your spirit,
and we live.

Out of darkness, dust and ash,
you raise a people filled with your life.

Holy Spirit come!
Give us the fullness of life in your presence for ever!

Opening Prayer

Eternal God,
source of all life,
through the death of your Son
you have brought us to life.
Help us to embrace the world you have given us,
that we may transform the darkness of its pain
into the life and joy of Easter.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Gospel Reading – John 11:1-45 (Short Form)

Mary and Martha sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill.' On receiving the message, 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 loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judaea.'

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. 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 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?'

'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to 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

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Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' 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 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, let him go free.'

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

Reflection - *Let him go free*

The final of the three Great Gospels of Lent is ours today - a Gospel story of life and freedom. Like the gospels of the last two Sundays, the dramatic story of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead is a story of love, faith and belief.

There are three different groups of believers in the story: those who believe that Jesus could have prevented Lazarus' death (Jesus is already known to be a healer); those who came to believe in him because they see Lazarus rise, and those, like Martha, who believe in Jesus even though Lazarus died.

In this Gospel Jesus proclaims himself 'the resurrection and the life'. We see him deeply moved by the death of his friend. We find him in earnest prayer with God. We see him full of strength as he commands Lazarus to come out of the tomb.

One thing that is rarely commented on about this story is the image of love that pervades it. Jesus has

treated the Samaritan woman with dignity, respect, gentleness and love, and reached out in love to heal the blind man without being asked. In this story his love for Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and the grief he feels because of that love, are very clearly seen.

For me, it brings together once again the connection between faith and love. If John intended this story to reassure his community (those who have faith in Jesus) then he makes clear that they are also loved by Jesus, and suggests in a certain manner Jesus, too, weeps when harm (illness and death) come to his friends (believers). The ultimate reassurance is that this loving, faith-filled relationship we have with Jesus not only sustains us in life but also sees us through the dark moments of suffering and death - ultimately to life beyond the restrictions (binding cloths) we find in this world. Finally, we will be free.

For me, the most powerful words in the Gospel are:
Unbind him, let him go free.

Freedom is one of the deepest aspirations of the human heart. We long to be free - from illness, worry, fear, (especially at the moment) the expectations of others, guilt, our faults and so on. The ultimate freedom is freedom from eternal death.

We know we can be physically alive and spiritually dead through envy, greed, fear, hatred. We know we can bring death to others through lies, gossip, meanness, cruelty, withholding forgiveness and so on.

By living the life of Christ we bring life, love and freedom to ourselves and each other.

Quiet time for reflection

Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

Gracious God,
in your great love you have freed us from death
in the resurrection of your Son
and raised us to new life in him.
Free us from all that enslaves us in death and
bring to life your Spirit in us.
Through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.



Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites of Australia & Timor-Leste at a time when many cannot gather together as we usually do to celebrate the Eucharist. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family at this time.



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