**Diocesan Mission for Renewing the Faith**

**Lectionary Year C**

**Preaching Plan**

*Stages (Based on Creed)*

* I believe—Advent and Christmas
* I believe in God, the Father Almighty—Baptism of the Lord till 27 February
* **I believe in the Son—Lent**
* I believe in the Holy Spirit, Church—Easter

*Themes (central to each stage)*

1. God comes to us and speaks in His Word (Heb. 1:1-2; CCC 65)
2. The Almighty Lord (CCC 268-274): I am Who am (Ex. 3:14; CCC 206-209)
3. **Jesus Christ is Lord (Ph. 2:6-11; CCC 446)**
4. Love has been poured into our hearts (Rom. 5:5; CCC 733-736)

**Stage 3: Lent (HD 57)**

**Liturgical Note**

* Year A readings will be used for their traditional importance not only in the Lenten season for all Christian disciples, but also to those members of RCIA preparing for the sacraments.
* Palm Sunday will end stage 3. The Triduum will not be included in these preaching points.
* Prayers over the people should be used regularly, even daily. Traditionally, these were reserved to Lent as an extra liturgical invocation of grace in a period of intense penance.
* Finally, to help expound the mystery of Christ throughout the Lenten season, the preaching points will follow this pattern:
	+ Ash Wednesday: The Reality of Sin
	+ 1st Sunday of Lent: Christ Begins to Conquer Sin
	+ 2nd Sunday of Lent: Jesus, the Son of God
	+ 3rd Sunday of Lent: Jesus, the Desire of Souls (Conversion)
	+ 4th Sunday of Lent: Jesus, the Healing Light for our Souls (Enlightenment)
	+ 5th Sunday of Lent: Jesus, Life over Death
	+ Palm Sunday: Christ Crucified and the Effect of our Sins

**Ash Wednesday**

* Introit
	+ You are merciful to all, O Lord, and despise nothing that you have made. You overlook people’s sins, to bring them to **repentance**, and you spare them, for you are the Lord our God.
* Collect
	+ Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this **campaign** of Christian service, so that, as we take up **battle** against **spiritual evils,** we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint.
* Preface
* Communio
	+ He who ponders the law of the Lord day and night will yield fruit in due season.
* Catechism
	+ CCC 386-389, 396-405: the reality of sin

**Reading I**

[Jl 2:12-18](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/joel/2?12)

Even now, says the LORD, **return** to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and **return** to the LORD, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment. Perhaps he will again relent and leave behind him a blessing, Offerings and libations for the LORD, your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion! proclaim a fast, call an assembly; Gather the people, notify the congregation; Assemble the elders, gather the children and the infants at the breast; Let the bridegroom quit his room and the bride her chamber. Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep, And say, “Spare, O LORD, your people, and make not your heritage a reproach, with the nations ruling over them! Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people.

**Responsorial Psalm**

[51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/51?3)

R.        (see 3a)  **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**
Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness;
            in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense.
Thoroughly wash me from my guilt
            and of my sin cleanse me.
R.        **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**
For I acknowledge my offense,
            and my sin is before me always:
“Against you only have I sinned,
            and done what is evil in your sight.”
R.        **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**
A clean heart create for me, O God,
            and a steadfast spirit renew within me.
Cast me not out from your presence,
            and your Holy Spirit take not from me.
R.        **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**
Give me back the joy of your salvation,
            and a willing spirit sustain in me.
O Lord, open my lips
            and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
R.        **Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

**Reading II**

[2 Cor 5:20—6:2](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/2corinthians/5?20)

Brothers and sisters: We are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be **reconciled** to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Working together, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says: *In an acceptable time I heard you,* *and on the day of salvation I helped you.* Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

**Verse Before the Gospel**

[See Ps 95:8](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/95?8)

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

**Gospel**

[Mt 6:1-6, 16-18](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/6?1)

Jesus said to his disciples: “Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your almsgiving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners so that others may see them. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you. When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.”

**Preaching Points (The Reality of Sin)**

1. We are at war, and today the trumpet calls us to battle
	* Each year Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, itself the beginning of a “campaign” against “spiritual evils” (Collect)
		+ The prophet Joel speaks of the penance of the whole community—the penance which everyone would engage in simultaneously on the Day of Atonement. For us, this happens specifically today (Ash Wednesday) and Good Friday—the whole Church enters into a time of reparation for our sins
		+ Jesus speaks of the private, personal penances that we take on in this holy season, and even every day of the year
	* One need not look far to recognize these evils that surround us. Yes, some are hidden, but many are readily visible for anyone with eyes to see
	* Often, however, these are only symptoms—Lent reminds us that we must go deeper to the root of it all: we must fight against sin itself, and that is what this day calls us to:
		+ To understand sin and fight against it with our whole selves—to live wholly for God rather than sin
2. What is sin?
	* CCC 386: “humanity's rejection of God and opposition to him.” “Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity. It has been defined as ‘an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the eternal law.’” (CCC1849)
		+ Anything we do—thought, word, deed, omission—that goes against God and neighbor
		+ NOT simply “a developmental flaw, a psychological weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure” (CCC 387)
			- One need only look at Christ on the Cross to see this is more than a simple human flaw
3. What sin does
	* Separates us from God to some degree
		+ CCC 1855: “Mortal sin destroys charity in the heart of man by a grave violation of God's law; it turns man away from God, who is his ultimate end and his beatitude, by preferring an inferior good to him.”
		+ CCC 1863: “Venial sin weakens charity; it manifests a disordered affection for created goods; it impedes the soul's progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good; it merits temporal punishment. Deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin.”
	* Causes division within our hearts, makes us lack peace. By sin, we are “wounded in [our] natural powers…, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin” (CCC 405)
	* Divides us from our neighbors whom we can see as enemies and competition to be eliminated rather than brothers and sisters of the same Father. E.g. Cain killing Abel; David killing Uriah
	* Ruins our relationship with the created world, which now we see as something to dominate or something which works against us.
	* CCC 1865: “Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts. This results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Thus sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself”
4. What is the solution?
	* Knowing what sin is allows us to know how to work against it
		+ In essence, to sin is to turn from God toward created things (St. Augustine: *aversio a Deo, conversio ad creaturas*)
		+ The remedy, then, as we hear often today and in this season, is to *turn back to God* (also St. Augustine: *conversi ad Dominum!*)
	* Repent, return, convert, be reconciled—these are all ways that today’s liturgy tells us to fight against sin
		+ Turn away from those things that keep you in sin and from God—turn away from them and leave them behind
		+ Turn to God, our Father, our Creator, the desire of our hearts, the one Who sets us free
5. DO NOT, however, attempt this on your own, for we cannot do it without Him
	* Prayer, fasting, almsgiving are essential to the Christian life and this season, but if we do it without Him, we will fail—we won’t be able to take even the first step
	* Rather, do all with Him, even the small things. Constantly turn to Him with prayers big and small.
	* Think of the psalmist today: “You are merciful to all, O Lord, and despise nothing that you have made. You overlook people’s sins, to bring them to repentance, and you spare them, for you are the Lord our God” (Introit)
		+ He does not say he will deal with his sins, but relies on God to do so
6. Conclusion?
	* The enemy is our sin and we must fight against it with all our strength.
	* Your strength, however, is not enough. Do not rely on yourself!
		+ Turn to God and give it all to Him. He will take care of you and heal your sins.

**First Sunday of Lent (HD 58-63)**

* Introit
	+ When he calls on me, I will answer him; I will deliver him and give him glory, I will grant him length of days.
* Collect
	+ Grant, almighty God, through the yearly observances of holy Lent, that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.
* Preface
	+ Our Lenten penance associates us to Christ in also overcoming sin
* Communio
	+ One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.
* Catechism
	+ CCC 540: the temptation of Jesus
	+ CCC 410: Christ the New Adam

**Reading I**

[Dt 26:4-10](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/deuteronomy/26?4)

Moses spoke to the people, saying: “The priest shall receive the basket from you and shall set it in front of the altar of the LORD, your God. Then you shall declare before the Lord, your God, ‘My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as an alien. But there he became a nation great, strong, and numerous. When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. He brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders; and bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey. Therefore, I have now brought you the firstfruits of the products of the soil which you, O LORD, have given me.’ And having set them before the LORD, your God, you shall bow down in his presence.”

**Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15.**

[Ps 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15.](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/91?1)

R. (cf. 15b) **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**
You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,
            who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,
say to the LORD, “My refuge and fortress,
            my God in whom I trust.”
R. **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**
No evil shall befall you,
            nor shall affliction come near your tent,
For to his angels he has given command about you,
            that they guard you in all your ways.
R. **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**
Upon their hands they shall bear you up,
            lest you dash your foot against a stone.
You shall tread upon the asp and the viper;
            you shall trample down the lion and the dragon.
R. **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**
Because he clings to me, I will deliver him;
            I will set him on high because he acknowledges my name.
He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;
            I will be with him in distress;
I will deliver him and glorify him.
R. **Be with me, Lord, when I am in trouble.**

**Reading II**

[Rom 10:8-13](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/romans/10?8)

Brothers and sisters: What does Scripture say? *The word is near you,* *in your mouth and in your heart*—that is, the word of faith that we preach—, for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. For the Scripture says, *No one who believes in him will be put to shame.* For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

**Verse Before the Gospel**

[Mt 4:4b](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/4?4)

One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.

**Gospel**

[Lk 4:1-13](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/4?1)

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, *One does not live on bread alone*.” Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, “I shall give to you all this power and glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whomever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me.” Jesus said to him in reply, “It is written *You shall worship the Lord, your God,* *and him alone shall you serve.*” Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: *He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you*, and: *With their hands they will support you,* *lest you dash your foot against a stone.*” Jesus said to him in reply, “It also says, *You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.*” When the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.

**Preaching Points (Christ Begins to Conquer Sin)**

1. Today begins a new stage in our diocesan mission
	* We now look to the Son during this Lenten season
	* Today we begin with Him in the desert
2. 40 = trial and temptation, purification
	* Noah and the Flood, Moses on the mountain, Israelites in desert, Elijah in desert
	* Jesus in the desert, where He shows He is the Lord and conqueror of the devil
3. 3 Temptations of Adam (Gen. 3:1-7)
	* “Good for food, delight to the eyes, make one wise”
		+ 3 reasons for fall; 3 roots of all other sin
	* 1 John 2:16-17: “For all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh [pleasure]** and the **lust of the eyes [possess things]** and the **pride of life [pride to replace God]**, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”
		+ CCC 377: “Triple concupiscence”: The “mastery” over the world that God offered man from the beginning was realized above all within man himself: *mastery of self*. The first man was unimpaired and ordered in his whole being because he was free from the triple concupiscencethat subjugates him to the pleasures of the senses, covetousness for earthly goods, and self-assertion, contrary to the dictates of reason.
4. 3 Triumphs of Christ, the New Adam
	* Overcomes in the desert what Adam could not in Garden
		+ Use of Scripture against the devil (Ps. 91 was an exorcism!)
	* Stone to bread: lust of the flesh (pleasure): “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”
	* Kingdoms: lust of the eyes (possess things): “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.”
	* Pinnacle of Temple/Work a wonder: pride of life (pride to replace God): “You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”
5. 3 Triumphs of the Christian:
	* CCC 540:Jesus’ temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him. This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter *for us*: “For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning” (Heb. 4:15). By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert.
		+ Penance, mortification, attachment to Christ/Cross > worldly things
			- Each adheres us to Christ Crucified
	* Prayer
		+ Against *pride*, *anger*, *sloth/acedia*
		+ God is God and we are not
			- Ps. 46:10: “Be still and know that I am God.”
		+ Christ prayed on Cross
			- Lk. 23:34: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”
			- Lk. 23:46: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”
	* Fasting
		+ Against *gluttony* and *lust*
		+ Christ “fasted” from drink before and during His Passion and Crucifixion
			- Mt. 26:29: “I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”
			- Mk. 15:23: “And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh; but he did not take it.”
			- Jn. 19:28: “I thirst.”
		+ Christ was stripped of clothes
			- Mt. 27:28-30: “And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe upon him, and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they spat upon him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, and put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.”
	* Almsgiving
		+ Against *envy* and *jealousy*
		+ Giving away keeps us from being attached
		+ Christ “gave away” his family
			- Jn. 19:25-29: “But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Mag'dalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.”
		+ Christ gave Himself, as well as Heaven
			- Eph. 5:2: “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
			- Lk. 23:43: “This day you will be with me in paradise.”

**Second Sunday of Lent (HD 64-68)**

* Introit
	+ Of you my heart has spoken: Seek his **face**. It is your **face**, O Lord, that I seek; hide not your **face** from me.
* Collect
	+ O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved **Son**, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual **sight** made pure, we may rejoice to behold your **glory**.
* Preface
	+ All of Scripture points to Cross and Resurrection
* Communio
	+ This is my beloved **Son**, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.
* Catechism
	+ CCC 554-556, 568: the Transfiguration

**Reading I**

[Gn 15:5-12, 17-18](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/genesis/15?5)

The Lord God took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so,” he added, “shall your descendants be.” Abram put his faith in the LORD, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness. He then said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession.” “O Lord GOD,” he asked, “how am I to know that I shall possess it?” He answered him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Abram brought him all these, split them in two, and placed each half opposite the other; but the birds he did not cut up. Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram stayed with them. As the sun was about to set, a trance fell upon Abram, and a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped him. When the sun had set and it was dark, there appeared a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch, which passed between those pieces. It was on that occasion that the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates.”

**Responsorial Psalm**

[Ps 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14.](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/27?1)

R. (1a) **The Lord is my light and my salvation.**
The LORD is my light and my salvation;
   whom should I fear?
The LORD is my life’s refuge;
   of whom should I be afraid?
R. **The Lord is my light and my salvation.**
Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call;
   have pity on me, and answer me.
Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.
R. **The Lord is my light and my salvation.**
Your presence, O LORD, I seek.
   Hide not your face from me;
do not in anger repel your servant.
   You are my helper: cast me not off.
R. **The Lord is my light and my salvation.**
I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD
   in the land of the living.
Wait for the LORD with courage;
   be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD.
R. **The Lord is my light and my salvation.**

**Reading II**

[Phil 3:17—4:1](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/philippians/3?17)

Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us. For many, as I have often told you and now tell you even in tears, conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction. Their God is their stomach; their glory is in their “shame.” Their minds are occupied with earthly things. But our **citizenship is in heaven**, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will change our lowly body to conform with his **glorified** body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord.

**Verse Before the Gospel**

[Cf. Mt 17:5](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/17?5)

From the shining cloud the Father’s voice is heard: This is my beloved Son, hear him.

**Gospel**

[Lk 9:28b-36](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/9?28)

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the **mountain** to pray. While he was praying his **face** changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in **glory** and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep, but becoming fully awake, they saw his **glory** and the two men standing with him. As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a **cloud** came and cast a shadow over them, and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a **voice** that said, “This is my chosen **Son**; listen to him.” After the **voice** had spoken, Jesus was found alone. They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

**Preaching Points (Jesus, the Son of God)**

1. Last week we were in the desert. This week we are on a mountain, Mount Tabor
	* The mountain in Scripture is a symbol for encounter with God: one goes up physically, which represents the soul’s ascent to God and heaven
		+ **Eden** was considered a mountain top paradise. Abraham’s hand was stayed from slaying Isaac on Mount **Moriah**. Moses receives the Commandments on Mount **Sinai.** Elijah hears God’s still, small voice on Mount **Horeb**. Jesus preaches on what we now call the Mount of **Beatitudes** for His most famous sermon.
	* All of this is in the background for today’s Gospel, where, with Peter, James, and John, we see that Jesus is the very Son of God among us
2. As the Gospel begins, the three disciples don’t know what is to happen
	* It is another time of Jesus going off to pray, to be in communion with His Father specifically as the Son
	* It is in this prayer that something happens: His face changes; He gives a glimpse of His true self, His Divine Person
		+ In addition to the mountain, this is an important theme today: seeking the Face of God: “Of you my heart has spoken: Seek his face. It is your face, O Lord, that I seek; hide not your face from me.” (Introit)
			- “The theme of the “quest for God’s face”, the desire to know this face, the desire to see God as he is, is clearly present throughout the Old Testament, to the extent that the Hebrew term *pānîm*, which means “face”, recurs 400 times, and refers to God 100 times. One hundred times it refers to God: to the wish to see God’s face is expressed 100 times.” (Benedict XVI, General Audience, 16 January 2013)
			- Even still, God’s face was unattainable, for His glory could not be shown or seen in this world
		+ But here, the incarnate Son of God shows His glory, “Something completely new happened, however, with the Incarnation. The search for God’s face was given an unimaginable turning-point, because this time this face could be seen: it is the face of Jesus, of the Son of God who became man.” (Benedict XVI, General Audience, 16 January 2013)
3. The impact of this may be lost on us
	* We know that Jesus is God, but it may not yet have been fully clear to the disciples
		+ Yes, they knew He could do things only God could, but only Peter to this point has made any sort of confession in Him as the Christ, and even then He does not know what that truly means
	* By showing His true face to these chosen disciples, then, He is showing His glory *as the Son of God* Who has become one of us
		+ At the same time, He is showing Why He has hidden His glory: to undergo His “exodus”—His Passion and Death for our sins. The Incarnation was for the Passion and Resurrection
	* The Transfiguration, then, shows that Jesus is God among us—there can be no doubt, for no earthly power or substance can perform such a glorious act
		+ This is shown also by the allusions to the Trinity in this passage
			- The Voice is the Father Who speaks to His Son
			- The cloud is the Holy Spirit, most often depicted as a “glory cloud” throughout Scripture
			- This means that the Father and the Spirit are testifying to the Son’s divinity: that Jesus is God
4. Whether you realize it or not, this makes all the difference
	* If Jesus isn’t God, as this passage shows Him to be, we are delusional, we have been fooled
		+ It means we are still stuck in sin and have no way out
	* But, Jesus is God—we have hope of reaching the Father, of seeing the Face of God
		+ And this is all because Jesus shows us God’s face, He Who is God Himself
	* Our purpose today and always must therefore be that of the psalmist and the disciples: to see the face of God, to see the face of Jesus
		+ This happens first in our daily prayer, and then in our service to His Church, especially the suffering members
		+ Let us pray with the Church today, then, for “spiritual sight made pure, [that] we may rejoice to behold your glory.”
			- Jesus, whom now I see hidden, / I ask You to fulfill what I so desire: / That the sight of Your Face being unveiled / I may have the happiness of seeing Your glory (St. Thomas Aquinas)

**Third Sunday of Lent (HD 71-72)**

* Introit
	+ My eyes are always on the Lord, for he rescues my feet from the snare. Turn to me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and poor.
* Collect
	+ O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be **lifted up by your mercy**.
* Preface
	+ Gift of faith as water to quench and fire to love
* Communio
	+ For anyone who drinks it, says the Lord, the water I shall give will become in him a spring welling up to eternal life.
* Catechism
	+ CCC 1214-1216, 1226-1228: baptism, rebirth of water and Spirit
	+ CCC 2560: prayer, conversion, living water

**Reading I**

[Ex 17:3-7](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/exodus/17?3)

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?”

**Responsorial Psalm**

[Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9.](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/95?1)

R. (8)  **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**
Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
            let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
            let us joyfully sing psalms to him.
R. **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**
Come, let us bow down in worship;
            let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
            and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.
R. **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**
Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
            “Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
            as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
            they tested me though they had seen my works.”
R. **If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.**

**Reading II**

[Rom 5:1-2, 5-8](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/romans/5?1)

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. And hope does not disappoint, 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.

**Verse before the Gospel**

[Cf. Jn 4:42, 15](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/4?42)

Lord, you are truly the Savior of the world; give me living water, that I may never thirst again.

**Gospel**

[Jn 4:5-42](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/4?5)

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, “Give me a drink.” His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” —For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.— Jesus answered and said to her, “**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.” The woman said to him, “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?” Jesus answered and said to her, “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.**” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.” Jesus said to her, “Go call your husband and come back.” The woman answered and said to him, “I do not have a husband.” Jesus answered her, “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. What you have said is true.” The woman said to him, “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.” Jesus said to her, “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.” The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one speaking with you.” 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, “**Come see a man who told me everything I have done.** Could he possibly be the Christ?” They went out of the town and came to him. Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.” So the disciples said to one another, “Could someone have brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “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.” 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.”

**Preaching Points (Jesus, the Desire of Souls (Conversion))**

1. For centuries, this Sunday of Lent and its Gospel have been used to highlight the conversion necessary to follow Christ
	* Following the light of the Transfiguration last week, one must change and allow the light of Christ into the darkness
	* This is especially true for those preparing for sacraments: like the woman at the well, those seeking the waters of baptism must turn from old ways to new life in Christ
2. Things do not start well though
	* In the First Reading we see the perennial temptation to stay in sin
		+ The Israelites, despite their years of tribulation at the hand of the Egyptians, want to return to that evil place to fill their bellies and quench their thirst
			- Better a full belly than life with the Lord! That is their mindset
			- Even still, however, God provides for them, for He never lacks in faithfulness
3. The Woman at the well presents a different path
	* She is a woman in sin coming to draw water. Little does she know, not only her bucket but her deepest desires will be fulfilled
	* When she meets Jesus, she stays cordial but misunderstands: what would this man want to do with her?
		+ As Jesus goes to show, He is there specifically for her: His desire is for her heart, for her soul, for her conversion to Him
	* As the conversation progresses, she begins to recognize there is something more to this man before her: she calls Him “sir,” “prophet,” eventually “Christ”
		+ In the end, He calls out Her sin, gently but unflinchingly: He does not want her to stay in her sin but come to Him
		+ She, who had her sin shoved in her face incessantly by the people of her village, declares that Jesus “told her all she had done”
			- She had been defined by her faults and failings and sins
			- Jesus saw more than this, and helped her to do the same
	* In that moment, when Jesus calls her from her sin, she sees herself anew
		+ She is not her sin, but she is His and He is hers (like Song of Songs, or the prophetic “I will be their God and they will be my people”)
		+ Ultimately, she realizes that her soul thirsts for the Messiah, for the One sent by God
			- Jesus fulfills that thirst of the soul more than water can sate our physical thirst
		+ She can’t help but tell others about her encounter with the Lord
			- This helps others to convert and follow Him too
4. The woman at the well represents all of the Old Testament encountering Jesus
	* Of course, not all turned to Him, but many did, even because of this woman
	* She also represents each and every one of us
		+ We seek all sorts of “water” that lead us from Jesus and leave us dry, arid, and parched
		+ In this moment, and every day, Jesus meets us at those wells and tells us we are meant for more: we are meant for Him “who died for us while we were yet sinners” (Second Reading)
			- He tells us our sins and helps us overcome them: He *does not* allow us to stay in them
				* Christ will not abide sin
			- He presents Himself to us as the living water that fulfills our every desire
				* The deepest longing of our hearts is for Him, the “Desire of the everlasting hills”
			- He pours out the Spirit into our hearts (Second Reading)
				* He as God gives us God Himself! In each sacrament, at every Mass
	* Time to examine your response
		+ Do you long for the fleshpots of Egypt over the path of Christ, the path of life?
			- Are you staying in sin or longing to go back to it? You will find nothing there; you will come up empty
		+ Do you stay at arms length like the woman at the beginning of the Gospel, seeing Jesus politely as “sir” rather than God calling you from sin?
			- Christianity is all or nothing. Either we are for Jesus or against Him. Don’t keep at a distance from Him but run to His embrace
		+ Do you allow Him to call you from sin and drink the waters of life?
			- Of course this is the hope, and whether you are preparing for sacraments or receive them already, you are called to conversion, to turn your life more fully to Christ every day, to leave no room for sin whatsoever
				* I can tell you where the true well of living water is:

The baptismal font, full of the waters of life

The confessional, that place of conversion and repentance

The Eucharist, Christ Himself gives to us

* + - * + Christ awaits you there in these wells, He calls you from your sin, He calls you to new life. How are you going to respond?

**Fourth Sunday of Lent/Laetare (HD 73-74)**

* Introit
	+ Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. **Be joyful**, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.
* Collect
	+ O God, who through your Word reconcile the human race to yourself in a wonderful way, grant, we pray, that with prompt devotion and eager faith the Christian people may hasten toward the solemn celebrations to come.
* Preface
	+ **Light in darkness brings freedom from sin**
* Communio
	+ The Lord anointed my eyes: I went, I washed, I saw and I believed in God.
* Catechism
	+ CCC 2466, 2715: Christ the light; contemplating the light
	+ CCC 1216: baptism is illumination

**Reading I**

[1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/1samuel/16?1)

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.

**Responsorial Psalm**

[Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6.](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/23?1)

R. (1)  **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**
The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
            In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
            he refreshes my soul.
R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**
He guides me in right paths
            for his name’s sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
            I fear no evil; for you are at my side
With your rod and your staff
            that give me courage.
R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**
You spread the table before me
            in the sight of my foes;
you anoint my head with oil;
            my cup overflows.
R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**
Only goodness and kindness follow me
            all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
            for years to come.
R. **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

**Reading II**

[Eph 5:8-14](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/ephesians/5?8)

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**.”

**Verse Before the Gospel**

[Jn 8:12](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/8?12)

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

**Gospel**

[Jn 9:1-41](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/9?1)

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, “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.” 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, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam” —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.” He said, “I am.” So they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” He replied, “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.” And they said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I don’t know.” 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, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.” So some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a sinful man do such signs?” And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, “What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” 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, “Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner.” He replied, “If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that **I was blind and now I see.**” So they said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “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?” They ridiculed him and said, “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.” The man answered and said to them, “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.” They answered and said to him, “You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He answered and said, “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, the one speaking with you is he.” He said, **“I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him.** Then Jesus said, “**I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.**” Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not also blind, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.

**Preaching Points (Jesus, the Healing Light for our Souls (Enlightenment))**

1. Among the many effects of sin, there is one we can think of today specifically: blindness of mind
	* “Just as bodily blindness is the privation of the principle of bodily sight, so blindness of mind is the privation of the principle of mental or intellectual sight” (Saint Thomas Aquinas, ST II-II, 15, 1c)
	* Whether this arises from some physical or mental incapacity, from a sin, or from intentional ignorance of some sort, it leaves the mind in darkness
		+ This is one reason why sin and darkness are associated: sin deprives the mind of the light by which it operates. One need only think of Judas: when he decided to betray Jesus, “he went out, and it was night.”
2. The Gospel gives us two examples of this
	* First, the man born blind has a physical incapacity to see: he is physically blind, but this is not due to sin
		+ Rather, “it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him” as Jesus works a miracle
	* Second, the Pharisees show their sinful, intellectual blindness of mind by saying they have no sin—by saying their sight is perfect
		+ Not only is this the sin of pride, it is also willfully ignoring the great works of God happening before them
		+ They willfully turn away from the light of Christ and so find themselves in darkness
3. Jesus enters into both of these “blindnesses,” with opposite effects
	* To the man born blind He brings healing
		+ For him, there is what we can call “enlightenment,” both because he could now see with his eyes, but because he is also brought to knowledge of the truth—he is no longer left in darkness about God’s work in the world
			- This is seen when he believes in Jesus and worships Him as God—his blindness is gone in more than one sense, and he sees what others refuse to
	* To the Pharisees, Jesus’ light shows itself to be too bright, and so it blinds them further
		+ They cannot handle such brilliance, and so they choose to remain in their sin, ignorance, and blindness
		+ They choose to remain with Moses instead of God Himself
		+ For this reason, Jesus’ light leaves them in darkness: “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”
4. As we draw nearer to the Sacred Triduum, we are presented with the same options
	* Either we can choose the healing light of Christ which will be the remedy not only for our sight and mind, but indeed for our whole soul
		+ This happens by fixing our eyes on Jesus: “His gaze purifies our heart; the light of the countenance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men.” (CCC 2715)
	* Or we can choose to remain in the darkness where we are—“with Moses” in a sense—instead of allowing for deeper and further conversion to the light
	* Remember: Jesus just said He came for judgment. He will separate the wheat from the chaff, or, to use today’s imagery, those in light from those in darkness
		+ Strive for the light, especially as we continue in this Lenten season! Confess your sins and rejoice, as we are told today, for God provides in Jesus the light to free us from the darkness of error and sin (Preface)

**Fifth Sunday of Lent (HD 75-76)**

* Introit
	+ Give me justice, O God, and plead my cause against a nation that is faithless. From the deceitful and cunning rescue me, for you, O God, are my strength.
* Collect
	+ 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.
* Preface
	+ Jesus, the God-man, leads to new life
* Communio
	+ Everyone who lives and believes in me will not die for ever, says the Lord.
* Catechism
	+ CCC 549, 646: raisings a messianic sign prefiguring Christ’s Resurrection
	+ CCC 2604: the prayer of Jesus before the raising of Lazarus
	+ CCC 1003: our present experience of resurrection
	+ CCC 989-990: the resurrection of the body

**Reading I**

[Ez 37:12-14](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/ezekiel/37?12)

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.

**Responsorial Psalm**

[Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8.](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/130?1)

R (7) **With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**
Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
            LORD, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
            to my voice in supplication.
R **With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**
If you, O LORD, mark iniquities,
            LORD, who can stand?
But with you is forgiveness,
            that you may be revered.
R **With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**
I trust in the LORD;
            my soul trusts in his word.
More than sentinels wait for the dawn,
            let Israel wait for the LORD.
R **With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**
For with the LORD is kindness
            and with him is plenteous redemption;
And he will redeem Israel
            from all their iniquities.
R **With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.**

**Reading II**

[Rom 8:8-11](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/romans/8?8)

Brothers and sisters: 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.

**Verse before the Gospel**

[Jn 11:25a, 26](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/11?25)

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord;
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will never die.

**Gospel**

[Jn 11:1-45](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/john/11?1)

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, “Master, the one you love is ill.” Then Jesus heard this he said, “**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.**” 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, “Let us go back to Judea.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?” Jesus answered, “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.” So the disciples said to him, “Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved.” But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. So then Jesus said to them clearly, “Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him.” So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go to die with him.” 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, “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.” Jesus said to her, “**Your brother will rise**.” Martha said to him, “I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus told her, “**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?**” She said to him, “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.” When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying, “The teacher is here and is asking for you.” 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, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping, he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said, “Where have you laid him?” 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, “**Take away the stone.**” Martha, the dead man’s sister, said to him, “Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, “**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.**” And when he had said this, He cried out in a loud voice, “**Lazarus, come out!**” 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, “**Untie him and let him go**.” Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.

**Preaching Points (Jesus, Life over Death)**

1. Once again Jesus says something is for the glory of God
	* The difference between this glorification and last’s weeks is that this one will prepare for Jesus’ death
		+ St. Thomas recognizes this—as Jesus heads off to Lazarus, he says “Let us go to die with him.”
		+ The tension has been building, and it only continues to grow as we draw closer to Holy Week
2. Nevertheless there is great glory in the Gospel today
	* Jesus raises the dead as a prelude to and promise of His own Resurrection
		+ Already the prophecy of Ezekiel in the first reading is beginning to be fulfilled: new life is being given to the dead
		+ More than this, Jesus is showing that our reliance must not be on the flesh, as St. Paul explains in the second reading—we can only rely on God, Who can of course glorify the flesh in ways impossible to us
	* This whole event continues the pattern we have seen each Sunday of Lent
		+ Grace over sin (1st Sunday, Temptation in desert)
		+ Truth of God over errors of man (2nd Sunday, Transfiguration)
		+ Quenching waters of God over parching waters of this world (3rd Sunday, Woman at well)
		+ Light of Christ over darkness of sin (4th Sunday, Man born blind)
		+ Now: Life in Christ over death
			- Notice this over and over in the Gospel:
				* Your brother will rise
				* Belief leads to life even if one dies
3. The particular scene of resurrection shows all of this
	* First, Jesus weeps: He knows our condition, has entered into it, and mourns what sin does to us
	* Second, He commands the stone be taken away: we could say that He removes those *external* things which prevent life from happening
	* Third, He prays: He knows the Father always hears Him, and asks for great things on our behalf. The Father never refuses the Son
	* Fourth, He commands Lazarus to come out: at this point, He does what only God can do and commands not only Lazarus, but life itself. In this moment, He removes those *internal* things that prevent life from happening, that prevent Lazarus from living
	* Fifth and finally, He commands that Lazarus be untied: He removes those things which linger from past death, that new life can take place in full.
	* What glory! The Father is glorified by showing His power in the Son, Who is in turn glorified. Lazarus himself is given some glory by being the recipient of such powerful grace. Even those around are witnesses to glory, to divine life conquering death (though they don’t realize this is only the beginning), and so they begin to believe
4. For us here, whether life-long Catholics or those about to receive sacraments, this same glory is given to us
	* In each sacrament, we are given a share in life over death and the story of Lazarus is present in our own lives
		+ Christ knows our pitiful condition and has given us every chance and way to overcome it
		+ He removes external and internal obstacles to grace, or helps us to navigate them when they could be for our benefit
		+ He continues to pray for us as our intercessor with the Father
		+ He gives new life and identity, refashioning us according to the Spirit, thus allowing us to live and find our identity in Him rather than past sins and failings
	* Overall, the Christian story is one in which Christ comes to conquer death in each one of us, both in daily living and at the end of life
		+ As He did with Lazarus, He calls us to come out of the tomb of sin and to live for Him, to leave behind all that keeps us from truly living
			- This is by His grace, by His glory, which we will see on full display on the Cross next week
			- What is keeping you in the grave? Are you willing to leave it? Christ calls you from the grave. Rise and follow Him

**Palm Sunday (HD 77)**

* Introit
	+ The children of the Hebrews, carrying olive branches, went to meet the Lord, crying out and saying: Hosanna in the highest.
	+ The children of the Hebrews spread their garments on the road, crying out and saying: Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
* Collect
	+ Almighty ever-living God, who as an example of humility for the human race to follow caused our Savior to take flesh and submit to the Cross, graciously grant that we may heed his lesson of patient suffering and so merit a share in his Resurrection.
* Preface
	+ The Innocent Jesus died for the guilty, that we might be saved
* Communio
	+ Father, if this chalice cannot pass without my drinking it, your will be done.
* Catechism
	+ CCC 557-560: Christ’s entry into Jerusalem
	+ CCC 602–603, 613-615: the Passion of Christ for sin

**At the Mass – Reading I**

[Is 50:4-7](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/50?4)

The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

**Responsorial Psalm**

[Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24.](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/psalms/22?8)

R (2a) **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**
All who see me scoff at me;
            they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads:
“He relied on the LORD; let him deliver him,
            let him rescue him, if he loves him.”
R **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**
Indeed, many dogs surround me,
            a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;
They have pierced my hands and my feet;
            I can count all my bones.
R **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**
They divide my garments among them,
            and for my vesture they cast lots.
But you, O LORD, be not far from me;
            O my help, hasten to aid me.
R **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**
I will proclaim your name to my brethren;
            in the midst of the assembly I will praise you:
“You who fear the LORD, praise him;
            all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him;
            revere him, all you descendants of Israel!”
R **My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**

**Reading II**

[Phil 2:6-11](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/philippians/2?6)

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Gospel**

[Not provided due to length]

**Preaching Points (Christ Crucified and the Effect of our Sins)**

1. Oscar Wilde’s Dorian Grey made a deal with the devil
	* He could never age, but a painting of him reflected the sinful state of his soul
		+ He saw the effects of his sin before his eyes
		+ Daily it wore him down until he despaired
	* All of us are touched by sin, whether personal sins, sins of others, or by the ultimate pain of sin: death.
		+ We see the effects and we can see how people react when confronted with the consequences of sinful action
		+ The Passion of Christ shows these reactions; each involve some sort of crying or weeping
2. 3 times Christ cried when He saw sin and knew its effects
	* At death when Lazarus died
	* When he saw how His people rejected His and His love: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not.”
	* When the effects of sin came crashing down upon Him in Gethsemane: Jesus “began to feel sorrow and distress” to the point of a heart attack and even cried out to God for help
3. 3 times people wept or “cried” out in Passion
	* “His Blood be upon us and on our children.” Take Him away, “Crucify him!” They cried out when things didn’t go their way, for Christ had challenged them
	* Judas wept in despair, thinking his sins too big for forgiveness
	* St. Peter wept in repentance when Jesus looked at him
4. We are confronted with our sins today as we gaze upon Christ crucified
	* At the same time, Christ looks at us like He did on Jerusalem, like He did at Peter, like He did on the whole world from the Cross, like He does from Heaven. He calls us away from sin and calls us to love. Answer Him!
	* Question becomes: How do we answer? How do we react when Christ looks at us?
		+ Is His gaze a challenge on our independence?
		+ Do we despair?
		+ Do we repent and love?
			- He was crucified for our sins—He knows their effect and still went to die for us. This should be our response, for in His death we are free
			- St. Alphonsus: “I repent of ever having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always, and then do with me as Thou wilt.”