

# Dear Padre,

*I've offered many Masses for wife and family, thinking if perhaps they are in Purgatory, it would help shorten their time. How can we tell if our prayers and Masses are beneficial? How do we know?*

It has been a long- and well-established expression of Catholic faith and practice to pray for the departed. Our prayers help us as we grieve and mourn the passing of the people we love. Our prayers help us keep their passing in perspective—not as the end of something, but rather as the beginning of new life in Christ. This is beneficial and needs no further evidence to illustrate the value of the practice.

Your question, on the other hand, goes beyond what the tradition emphasizes. It seems like you are seeking some sort of guarantee or warranty, which you assume will be reassuring. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee or warranty either promised or implied in this spiritual practice. In death, indeed in the whole of Christian life, we bump up against mystery, not certitude. We are invited to enter into the mystery. To grow in the mystery. To be graced by the mystery. Nothing more is possible. We hope because we believe. We believe because we practice what we hope for. ●



RENTA SEDMAKOVA / SHUTTERSTOCK

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR / DearPadre.org



FAUSTO RENDA / SHUTTERSTOCK

## A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

*A very widespread ailment of our time is the fatigue of living: reality seems to us to be too complex, burdensome, difficult to face. And so, we switch off, we fall asleep.... But reality has to be faced.... Let us go to Jesus: he can heal us; he can revive us. Jesus is our hope!*

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME, JUNE 25, 2025

### Monday

MARCH 23

Lenten Weekday  
Dn 13:1–9, 15–17,  
19–30, 33–62 or  
13:41c–62  
Jn 8:1–11

### Tuesday

MARCH 24

Lenten Weekday  
Nm 21:4–9  
Jn 8:21–30

### Wednesday

MARCH 25

The Annunciation  
of the Lord  
Is 7:10–14; 8:10  
Heb 10:4–10  
Lk 1:26–38

### Thursday

MARCH 26

Lenten Weekday  
Gn 17:3–9  
Jn 8:51–59

### Friday

MARCH 27

Lenten Weekday  
Jer 20:10–13  
Jn 10:31–42

### Saturday

MARCH 28

Lenten Weekday  
Ez 37:21–28  
Jn 11:45–56

### Sunday

MARCH 29

Palm Sunday of the  
Passion of the Lord  
Mt 21:1–11  
Is 50:4–7  
Phil 2:6–11  
Mt 26:14–27:66 or  
27:11–54

## Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to [DearPadre.org](http://DearPadre.org) to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.

# Our Parish COMMUNITY

March 22, 2026

Fifth Sunday of Lent (A)

Ezekiel 37:12–14 / Romans 8:8–11 / John 11:1–45 or 11:3–7, 17, 20–27, 33b–45



# I Am the Resurrection

ANN M. GARRIDO

The prophets before Jesus had long spoken of God's dreams for our world. In seasons of darkness and despair, they would offer snapshots of hope for what it would be like in the "kingdom of God." Those who were blind would see. Those unable to walk would dance. Those imprisoned would be free. And those who had died would be raised to life again.

In today's gospel, we hear that Martha shared in the prophets' hope. When Jesus tells her that her brother Lazarus will rise, she replies, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." In other words, Martha believes in the coming "kingdom of God." But then, Jesus stuns her with his response: "I am the resurrection and the life." That is, "I am the kingdom of God."

Origen of Alexandria—a third-century theologian—spoke of Jesus as the *autobasileia*. The term comes from two Greek words: *auto*, meaning "self," and *basileia*, meaning "kingdom." It was his way of expressing that Jesus was the fulfillment of all that the prophets had preached. He was all of God's dreams for us manifest, not as had been anticipated in a future time, but in a living person.

We still wait for God's dreams to be realized on a global scale, but, like Martha, we have seen what that realization will look like already in our experience of Jesus. With Martha, we can confess that he is "the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." ●

## Reflect

*Where do I see signs or snapshots of the kingdom of God?*



LEARN ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF OUR PARISH COMMUNITY



I will put my spirit in you that you may come to life, and I will settle you in your land," [says the Lord God].

EZEKIEL 37:14



The  
**Catholic Church**  
in Pocahontas County  
West Virginia

OUR MISSION  
Love the Lord your God  
with all your heart,  
soul, mind,  
and strength.  
Love your neighbor as yourself.  
(Mark 12:30-31, NAB-RE)

ST. JOHN NEUMANN PARISH & CHURCH OFFICE, 714 Tenth Avenue, Marlinton WV 24954  
ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST MISSION, 92 Catholic Church Road, Rts 250 & 92, Bartow WV 24920  
ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX CHAPEL, 6332 Snowshoe Drive, Snowshoe WV 26209  
Telephone: St. John Neumann 304-799-6778, St. Bernard of Clairvaux 304-572-0847  
Website: [PocahontasCatholic.org](http://PocahontasCatholic.org)  
E-mail: [Pastor@PocahontasCatholic.org](mailto:Pastor@PocahontasCatholic.org)



Patty Bryant  
Margaret Bryant  
Ann Burke  
Danielle Cade  
Dick Connor  
Matt Madruga  
Cynthia Olson  
Quinn Riffle  
Tristan Sizemore

**EUCCHARIST THIS WEEK**

Monday 8:00 a.m. St. John  
Wednesday 8:00 a.m. St. John  
Friday 8:00 a.m. St. John  
Saturday 5:30 p.m. St. Bernard  
Sunday 9:00 a.m. St. John  
11:30 a.m. St. Mark



St. John Neumann Church is open for private prayer every day during daylight.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered before each Eucharist or by appointment, and at St. Bernard on Saturdays 4:30-5:00 p.m.

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is available any time upon request.



Please call the Church office (304-799-6778) if you know of a parishioner who is sick, in the hospital or nursing home, homebound, deployed, or in prison.

To report an incidence of suspected child sexual abuse, please contact your local law enforcement agency, or you may confidentially contact WV Child Protective Services at 800-352-6513.  
To report suspected cases of sexual abuse by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact the Diocese at 888-434-6237 or 304-233-0880.  
To report suspected cases of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse by a bishop or eparch, please contact [ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://ReportBishopAbuse.org) or call 800-276-1562.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE  
"Do you believe this?"  
(John 11:26, NAB-RE)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTES**

• **Catholic Sharing Appeal (CSA) 2026** has begun. Our goal this year for St. John Neumann and St. Bernard is \$4,110.00, and for St. Mark the Evangelist is \$1,750.00. Please help us exceed our goals. The 2025 CSA sent back to St. John Neumann \$3,950.00, to St. Mark the Evangelist \$838.00, and to St. Bernard \$610.00, plus a \$500 grant for food pantries.



• **Community Lenten Prayer Service** is every Wednesday at noon at Marlinton United Methodist Church. The topic this week is "Cleansing: Jesus Makes You Clean" (Psalm 51 & Leviticus 16:11-16) by Paul Schafer.

• **Community Dinner** is this Thursday (March 26) at Marlinton Presbyterian Church 5:00-6:30 p.m. It's a pancake and sausage dinner, and it's free and open to the public.

• **Stations of the Cross** is every Friday during Lent at 5 p.m. at St. John Neumann and St. Mark the Evangelist. Stations will include Exposition and Benediction at St. Mark the Evangelist this Friday.

	LAST WEEKEND	
	<u>attendance</u>	<u>collection</u>
St. John Neumann	31	\$660.00
Fund for the Poor		\$346.00
Catholic Sharing Appeal grant		\$500.00
St. Mark the Evangelist	22	\$282.50
Fund for the Poor		\$52.00
St. Bernard of Clairvaux	30	\$775.00
Fund for the Poor		\$55.00
<b>total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>\$2,670.50</b>

Lectionary for Mass for use in the Dioceses of the United States, second typical edition, Copyright © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine; Psalm refrain © 1968, 1981, 1997, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved. Neither this work nor any part of it may be reproduced, distributed, performed or displayed in any medium, including electronic or digital, without permission in writing from the copyright owner. Used with permission.



**Fund for the Poor**  
**\$949.24 distributed in February**  
**in direct aid for those in need.**



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT - YEAR A

First Reading (Ezekiel 37:12-14)

Thus says the Lord GOD:  
O my people, I will open your graves  
and have you rise from them,  
and bring you back to the land of Israel.  
Then you shall know that I am the LORD,  
when I open your graves and have you rise from them,  
O my people!  
I will put my spirit in you that you may live,  
and I will settle you upon your land;  
thus you shall know that I am the LORD.  
I have promised, and I will do it, says the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8,  
*Grail translation, 1963*)

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

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

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

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

Because with the Lord there is mercy  
And fullness of redemption,  
Israel indeed he will redeem  
From all its iniquity.

Second Reading (Romans 8:8-11)

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.

Gospel Acclamation (John 11:25a, 26)

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

Gospel (John 11:1-45) (long form)

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.”  
When 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.

Gospel (John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45) (short form)

The sisters of Lazarus sent word to Jesus, saying,  
“Master, the one you love is ill.”  
When 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.”

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

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,  
“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.”

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.

## Reflection (2023)

What does it take for you to *believe* something? For some, it is that you saw it on Fox News or MSNBC, which is sad. But for you as a Christian, what should it take for you to *believe*?

The answer is in the first reading from the prophet Ezekiel, and the second reading from St. Paul, and from the Gospel reading according to St. John.

Many people, maybe even every one of us, has prayed for a miracle at some time in our lives. Perhaps it was a loved one who was seriously ill, or an impossible situation we were confronted with, or maybe as we witness the awful suffering that we see because of violent men and dictators in our world today.

Perhaps you've been to Montreal, just across the border from where I lived for many years in New York State, and you've gone to St. Joseph Oratory. In many large rooms in the basement, you will see crutches, prosthetics, wheelchairs, all kinds of things that people left behind, after they went there to pray for healing – and they were healed, miraculously. Miracles happen, all the time. And so often people thank God for the miracle, thanking God that he looked with favor on them. But that suggests that God doesn't care for the many others who also prayed for miracles and never got them. What does that say about God? God loves me and doesn't love you?

Actually, God loves each of us equally and completely. But miracles are not the way God expresses his love for us. Miracles are about building faith, helping us to *believe*, they are not about “me.” And in a self-centered world, in a society full of entitlement, in a country where what I think must be infallible, it might come as a surprise that everything is not about “me!”

Through Ezekiel the prophet, God tells the 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.” The miracle of returning from exile in Babylon and the re-building of the temple is not about the people, but is so that the people will know that God is God. (Ezekiel 37:14)

Jesus raises the dead man Lazarus back to life, but eventually, maybe much later, Lazarus would die anyway. Jesus didn't raise Lazarus for Lazarus' sake, it was, as Jesus 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,” (John 11:5) “that you may *believe*.” (John 11:15)

Every miracle happens, ostensibly to heal or cure or help someone in need, but actually to make God known, and to increase faith where faith might be lacking, so that we might *believe*. As St. Paul said, “you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.” (Romans 8:9)

## Reflection (2026)

What do you *believe*? The Gospel today is a long story about the healing of Lazarus. Lazarus is the silent one, who died, was buried, but then was raised from the dead. His sisters, Mary and Martha, did all the talking to Jesus, along with Thomas and the other disciples, and the crowd of other Jews. And we can become distracted by the details of the story.

But one word comes back over and over again in the reading: *believe*. John is really asking his audience, including each one of us, ‘what do you *believe*?’ That question really asks ‘who do you *believe*,’ because who we *believe* determines what we *believe*.

We live in a world full of social media, influencers, politicians, conspiracy theorists, and each of them wants us to *believe* them. And if we *believe* them, then we *believe* what they tell us – whether or not it is true, and so often, maybe most often, it is not true. Who we *believe* determines what we *believe*.

The Gospel is clear: Jesus is who we should *believe*, and because of that, the Gospel is what we should *believe*.

**22 March 2026**  
**Fifth Sunday of Lent - Year A**

*Penitential Rite*

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do,  
through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;  
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints,  
and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.  
May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,  
and bring us to everlasting life.  
Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

*Prayer of the Faithful*

Merciful Father, our identity is in you, our dependence is on you, and so we lift up our needs to you in prayer:

- for the leaders of the Church, that they will promote the values of the Gospel, we pray
- for political leaders, that they will be of service to their people, we pray
- for peace in the Middle East, we pray
- for the healing of those who are ill, we pray
- for all of us gathered for Eucharist, that our faith will increase and our belief will be strengthened, we pray
- for all those who have died, that they will be saved, we pray
- and for your other intentions  
(pause)  
for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray

Almighty Father, you raised your Son from the dead. Hear our petitions and raise us to new life.  
We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.