

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT 2023

*I am*

the Resurrection.



**Reflection and Prayer for Lent with Sunday readings and a spiritual teacher  
from our Catholic tradition – Saint Teresa of Avila.**

# SIGN OF THE CROSS.

**Lord, out of the depths we cry to you; Lord, hear our voice.**

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## FROM THE READINGS

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**First Reading:** And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live, and I shall resettle you on your own soil; and you will know that I, the Lord, have said and done this – it is the Lord who speaks. *Ezekiel 37:12-14*

**Psalm:** '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.

*Psalm 129/130:1-2*

**Gospel:** There was a man named Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister, Martha, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill'...

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many 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. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died, but even now I know that God will grant whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection. Anyone who believes in me, even though that person dies, 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 reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day since he died.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took the stone away. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I myself knew that you hear me always, but I speak for the sake of all these who are standing around me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me'. When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound

with strips of material, and a cloth over his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free'.

*John 11:1-45 from Sunday's Gospel John*

———— FROM SAINT TERESA OF AVILA 1515-1582 ————

**Teresa's** paternal grandfather converted from Judaism to Christianity and his children and grandchildren were devout Christians. Teresa became a Carmelite nun and a reformer of monasteries when she found many communities living luxuriously and lacking discipline. At age 39, Teresa was struck by the love of the suffering Christ and influenced by the story of St Augustine's spiritual journey in his Confessions. In her early years, she had thought outward acts of piety were the most important thing. She began to focus more on trusting and allowing God to work in the depths of her soul.

Teresa was a woman of prayer, who worked with her friend, and spiritual director for a time, Saint John of the Cross, in the work of Carmelite reform. Their writings on prayer complimented each other. Teresa used many images to help people understand how to find God in personal prayer; a barren land, water, rain, streams, buckets, fountains, gardens, a silkworm and a house, an 'Interior Castle', with many mansions. She emphasized the importance of humility in prayer and taught that God dwells in the human soul. Teresa's writings have been valued far and wide.

## TERESA'S WORDS

**I see mental prayer** as simply a friendly interchanges and frequent solitary conversation with him who, we know, loves us.

*Life.*

**Consider that true humility** is largely a readiness for what the Lord desires to do with you and happiness that he should do it, always regarding yourself as unworthy to be called his servant.

*The Way of Perfection*

**If I had understood then, as I do know,** how this great King dwells within this tiny palace of my soul, I would not have left him alone so often, but would have remained with him ...

*The Way of Perfection.*

**I once wondered** why our Lord so loved the virtue of humility. Suddenly this reason came to me, though I had never thought of it before: it is because God is sovereign Truth, and to be humble is to walk in truth, for it is absolutely true that we have no good thing in ourselves, but only misery and vanity; and anyone who fails to understand this, is walking in falsehood.

*The Interior Castle.*

**Gaze upon the Crucified and nothing else will matter to you ...** The foundation of this whole edifice to rise very high. In fact, it will be best for you if it is not at all high. If it were, it would crash to the ground. Therefore, sisters, if you want to lay good foundations, you must seek to be the least of all and the slave of God. Try to please and serve all your companions. Do that and it will be more valuable to you than to them, and your foundations will be laid so firmly that your castle will not fall.

*The Interior Castle.*

**Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you, all things are passing away:** God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices.

*St Teresa's Bookmark (written in the margins of her breviary)*

## PRAYER AND REFLECTION

- **Ask** for God's guidance.
- **Read** the scripture passages and words of St Teresa of Avila, aloud or silently.
- **Reflect and pray**, stopping to ponder any 'stand out' words or phrases. 10 mins
- **Respond** 10-15 mins

Individuals: Write or sit quietly with your reflections.

Groups: Share your responses and listen to others. 2-3 mins each

- o What stands out for you?
- o What do you want to take with you?

- **Express a hope for the future.**

## PRAYER

*Lord Jesus Christ, guide us for  
you have no body on earth now but ours,  
no hands but yours, no feet but yours;  
ours are the eyes through which you look with compassion on the world;  
ours are the feet with which you walk to do good;  
ours are the hands with which you bless all the world. Amen.*

*Prayer adapted from words of St Teresa of Avila*

