A photograph of a man standing in a dark cave, illuminated by a single torch he is holding. The cave walls are rugged and textured, with warm orange and red lighting. The man is shirtless, wearing dark pants and a dark cloak draped over his shoulders. The scene is dramatic and atmospheric.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT 2020

Unbind him. Let him go free

Fifth Sunday of Lent

From the Readings

The Lord says this: I am now going to open your graves ...
And I shall put my spirit in you, and you will live ...

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!.

Psalms 130:1-2

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, then he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

Romans 8:11

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.' 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 11:21-27, 41-44

Reflections

Death, when it comes, follows a lifetime of small deaths and risings to new life.

Sometimes a wave of hope rushes through my discouraged heart just when I thought all hope was gone. A quiet joy emerges from nowhere, it seems, and stands beside a great sorrow in my soul. And there are times when feelings of love enter into places where I thought there was only disgust and intolerance. In the future I would like to be more present to those waves of



hope, that quiet joy, and those feelings of love. I believe these are moments of readiness for healing. As I learn to recognise these stirrings as voices of God, I will be able to celebrate many a healing feast.

Macrina Widederkehr, Seven Sacred Pauses, 78.

Keep following your hopes and dreams. But be careful about one temptation that can hold us back. It is anxiety. Anxiety can work against us by making us give up whenever we do not see instant results. Our best dreams are only attained through hope, patience and commitment, and not in haste. At the same time, we should not be hesitant, afraid to take chances or make mistakes. Avoid the paralysis of the living dead, who have no life because they are afraid to take risks, to make mistakes or to persevere in their commitments. Even if you make mistakes, you can always get up and start over, for no one has the right to rob you of hope.

Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, 142.

The life that Jesus gives us is a love story, a life history that wants to blend with ours and sink roots in the soil of our own lives. That life is not salvation up 'in the cloud' and waiting to be downloaded, a new 'app' to be discovered, or a technique of mental self-improvement. The salvation that God offers us is an invitation to be part of a love story interwoven with our personal stories; it is alive and wants to be born in our midst so that we can bear fruit just as we are, wherever we are and with everyone all around us.

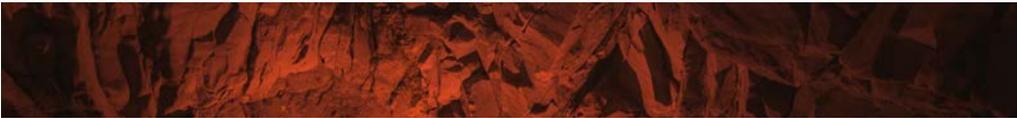
Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, 252.

Ahead of Us Lies Holy Week

Ahead of us lies Holy Week. Emphasised throughout its days is the persistent reality of the full humanity of God. The movement from death to life, from darkness to light, identifiable in every phase of the liturgy, is remembered in flesh, tears, blood – all the emotions of a very human being. And by virtue of our solidarity with the Saviour, everyone and everything is redeemed and completed and, from the inside out, the world itself is renewed and restored.

Daniel O'Leary, Unmasking God, 25.





For Thinking and Talking

1. **From these readings and reflections**, what words, phrases and insights stand out for you?
2. **Remember** an experience of dying and rising to new life. What was life like afterwards?
3. **Express** a hope or intention for the future.

Closing Prayer

May the mercy of Christ be the cloak I wear.
May the kindness of Christ be my life's seasoning.
May the humility of Christ be the path of my life.
May the meekness of Christ permeate my being.
May the patience of Christ be at home in me.
May the forgiveness of Christ flow out of my heart.
May the love of Christ wrap me 'round.
May the peace of Christ reign in my heart.
May the gratitude of Christ be my soul's song.
May the wisdom of Christ be my teacher.
May the Word of Christ be my heart's true home. Amen.

Macrina Widederkehr, Seven Sacred Pauses, 141-142.



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Acknowledgements: Daniel O'Leary, *Unmasking God*, Dublin: Columba Press, 2011.; Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit*, 2019; Macrina Widederkehr, *Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully Through the Hours of the Day*, Notre Dame Indiana: Sorin Books, 2008;