

Sunday, April 6, 2025 – Fifth Sunday of Lent

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Introduction

Our God makes all things new. In the first reading God promises it. In the gospel Mary anticipates it, anointing Jesus' feet with costly perfume in preparation for the day of his burial. In the second reading Paul recalls his transformation from the persecutor Saul into an apostle. In baptism, God's new person (you!) rises daily from the deadly mire of trespasses and sins.

Prayer of the Day

Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness, and your grace waters our desert. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love given to all through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
²⁰ The wild animals will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
²¹ the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

Psalm 126

¹ When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
then were we like those who dream.

² **Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy.
Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."**

³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are glad indeed.

⁴ **Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses of the Negeb.**

⁵ Those who sowed with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

⁶ **Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.**

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

[Paul writes:] ^{4b} If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷ Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel: John 12:1-8

¹ Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ² There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶ (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial." ⁸ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Prayers and introductions from
SundaysAndSeasons.com

Prayers of Intercession

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

The church declares your praise, O God. Guide us in the example of Isaiah's imagination, Paul's transformed identity, and Mary's faith and devotion; that our lives, too, may be poured out in love as we trust in your promises. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

The earth declares your praise, O God. Make a way for the planet's future in the sea and the wilderness, the mountains and plains, the tundra and wetlands. Repair habitats and sustainable ecosystems on, above, and beneath the ground. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

The nations declare your praise, O God. Where religious differences divide, bring together those who worship you in the name of Jesus Christ and those who call to you with different names. Guide interreligious dialogue, that faith may unite rather than divide communities. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

The people declare your praise, O God. Restore those whose hope has been dampened through a health diagnosis, job or home loss, divorce, or death. Bring healing to those in need. May all who weep now sing songs of joy again. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

The gifts of the Spirit declare your praise, O God. We thank you for artists who proclaim the gospel. Inspire music, poetry, and images that proclaim the new thing you are doing. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

The communion of saints declares your praise, O God. Giving thanks for those who have died, we trust in the one who has made them his own: Christ Jesus, our crucified and risen Savior. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.

Amen.

Reflection

Facing Death

Mary of Bethany recognizes Jesus' mission: he has come to die. Perceiving the new thing God is doing, she embraces his death and pours out her devotion to Jesus in an extravagant act. The prophet beseeches the Israelites to forget the old pattern of salvation—the dry way through the Red Sea. Now God will make a new way, a wet way, in a dry, barren, and death-filled place.

On this Sunday in Lent, salvation lies not behind us but before us, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Mary's action in the face of death is bold. She anoints a corpse, and in so doing honors Jesus' vulnerability and his life. She models love for the other disciples and for us.

By honestly facing the reality of death, we are more fully able to live honoring our own vulnerability and the humanity of others. We live with gratitude. We are more able to love one another and God extravagantly. However, in our culture, mortality is often avoided. The stench of death is removed through chemicals, and deceased bodies are cosmetically enhanced to appear as life-like as possible.

Each day, we the baptized boldly face death, trusting that God has made a new way, a wet way, to travel from death to life. God in Christ has honored human vulnerability by becoming flesh and by laying down his own life. He is the new way through a dry, barren, and death-filled place. Because Christ Jesus has made them his own, the baptized walk wet through the desert places of this life, pouring out the whole of their lives, down to the very last hair, in extravagant love for God and for the people God has formed.



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