

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

You have breathed into us the breath of life. Enliven your church. Deepen our partnerships with our companion churches around the globe (*specific synods, dioceses, or congregations may be named*), and bless the work of missionaries who accompany them. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Your spirit brings life to creation. Enliven the natural world and restore ecosystems in need of healing (*local natural places may be named*). Uplift prophetic voices that turn us to the needs of the soil beneath our feet and the air all around. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

You redeem the world and its peoples. Free us from systems of oppression. Unbind nations and societies from the sins of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Raise up leaders at all levels of government who work to promote the dignity of every human life. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 143. **Tuesday** 2 Kings 4:18-37. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Hans Nielsen Hauge, renewer of the church, died 1824) Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41. **Thursday** Psalm 31:9-16. **Friday** (commemoration of John Donne, poet, died 1631) Philippians 1:21-30. **Saturday** Mark 10:32-34. **Passion/Palm Sunday** Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14—27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54.

CELEBRATE March 26, 2023

Volume 54, Number 2

CELEBRATE (ISSN 1083-3242, USPS 763-460) is published quarterly by Augsburg Fortress, 411 Washington Avenue North, Third Floor, Minneapolis, MN, 55401. Periodicals postage paid in St. Paul, MN and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Celebrate, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, P.O. Box 1553, Minneapolis, MN 55440-8730. Printed in U.S.A. Price per weekly part \$5.79 per 100 copies; price in Canada subject to exchange rates. Minimum order 50 copies of each issue; all orders must be in multiples of 50. Copyright © 2022 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced. Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Readings from New Revised Standard Version Bible with Apocrypha © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Prayer of the day, psalm, and readings during the week from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Refrain music by Daniel Kallman. Refrain accompaniment is in *Psalter for Worship, Year A* (Augsburg Fortress, 2007). Please visit our website at [augsburgfortress.org](http://augsburgfortress.org). Lectionary year A.

6 of 15  
Tracks 1 and 2

You weep when we weep. Be present with those who grieve or who are troubled by illness (*especially*). You hear us when we call to you. Deliver us from the depths of our despair, and free us from the worries that bind us. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Your Spirit of life dwells in our assembly. Bless the music ministries of this congregation (*specific ensembles may be named*) and all who lead us in hymns of praise and thanksgiving and in songs of lament and prayer. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You are the resurrection and the life. Even though we die, we will live. With thanksgiving, we remember all your saints who now live in your eternal love. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.  
**Amen.**



# Celebrate

Fifth Sunday in Lent  
March 26, 2023

In today's gospel Jesus reveals his power over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. The prophet Ezekiel prophesies God breathing new life into dry bones. To those in exile or living in the shadows of death, these stories proclaim God's promise of resurrection. In baptism we die with Christ that we might also be raised with him to new life. At the Easter Vigil we will welcome the newly baptized as we remember God's unfailing promise in our baptism.

## Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is a promise that Israel as a nation, though dead in exile, will live again in their land through God's life-giving spirit. Three times Israel is assured that through this vision they will know that "I am the LORD."

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." <sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup>I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

<sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in

them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." <sup>10</sup>I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

<sup>11</sup>Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup>I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."



I wait for you, O LORD; in your word is my hope.

Out <sup>1</sup> of the depths

I cry to <sup>1</sup> you, O LORD;

<sup>2</sup>O LORD, <sup>1</sup> hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my <sup>1</sup> supplication.

<sup>3</sup>If you were to keep watch <sup>1</sup> over sins,

O LORD, <sup>1</sup> who could stand?

<sup>4</sup>Yet with you <sup>1</sup> is forgiveness,

in order that you <sup>1</sup> may be feared. **R**

<sup>5</sup>I wait for you, O LORD; <sup>1</sup> my soul waits;

in your word <sup>1</sup> is my hope.

<sup>6</sup>My soul waits for the Lord

more than those who keep watch <sup>1</sup> for the morning,

more than those who keep watch <sup>1</sup> for the morning.

<sup>7</sup>O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is <sup>1</sup> steadfast love;

with the LORD there is plen- <sup>1</sup> teous redemption.

<sup>8</sup>For the LORD shall <sup>1</sup> redeem Israel

from <sup>1</sup> all their sins. **R**

## Second Reading

## Romans 8:6-11

*For Paul, Christian spirituality entails living in the reality of the Holy Spirit. The driving force behind our actions and values is not our sinful desire for self-satisfaction but the very Spirit by which God raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise us from the dead.*

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit

of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

*Jesus is moved to sorrow when his friend Lazarus falls ill and dies. Then, in a dramatic scene, he calls his friend out of the tomb and restores him to life.*

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup>But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup>Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup>after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

<sup>7</sup>Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup>The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup>Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. <sup>10</sup>But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." <sup>11</sup>After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." <sup>12</sup>The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." <sup>13</sup>Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup>Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup>For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup>Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup>and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup>Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.

Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup>She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

<sup>28</sup>When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." <sup>29</sup>And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup>Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup>The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. <sup>32</sup>When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup>When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup>He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup>Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup>So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup>But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup>Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." <sup>40</sup>Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup>So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup>I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." <sup>43</sup>When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup>The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

<sup>45</sup>Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.