

Unedited Emotions

Scripture Background

This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group.

Although not all Catholics will recognize the first reading from Ezekiel in which God promises to raise the dead from their graves, most, if not all, Jews of Jesus' time would have been familiar with it. Certainly, Jesus knew of this prophecy, and so would his friends, Mary and Martha, who perhaps had this reading on their minds when their brother Lazarus died. In the second reading, Paul also wrote about physical death and his trust that God will raise the dead. All three readings, then, point to a reason for hope and belief that death will not have the final word.

Opening Prayer

Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amèn.

Good and Gracious God,
thank you for this gathering to reflect on your Word of Life.

Open our eyes and ears
so that we may see and hear the message you have for us today.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gospel Reading: John 11:1-45

Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence.

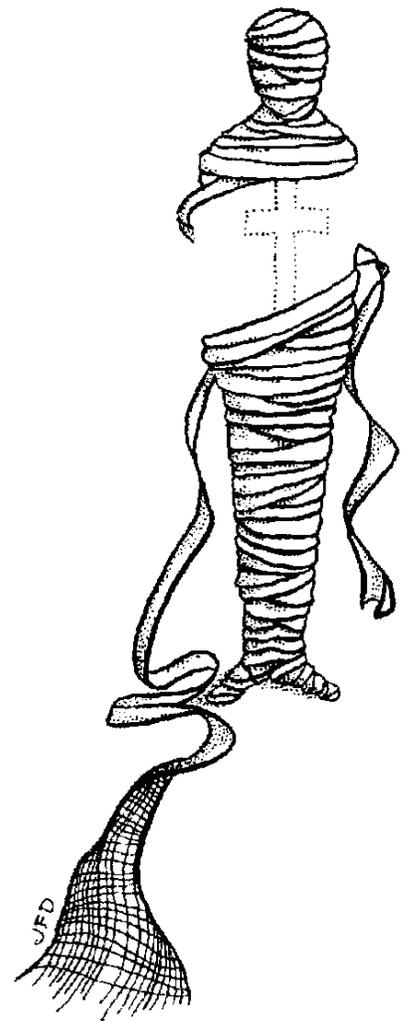
Ask: What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down.

March 29, 2020 • Year A

5th Sunday in Lent

- ▶ Ezekiel 37:12-14 - Prophecy of restoration
- ▶ Romans 8:8-11 - The flesh and the Spirit
- ▶ John 11:1-45 - The raising of Lazarus



Reflections on the Reading

Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:

This excerpt from the story of the raising of Lazarus gives us further evidence of the full humanity of Jesus. Other Gospel passages tell us of the normal human emotions Jesus experienced because, indeed, he did become one of us. He was not above feelings of impatience, anger, or tenderness. At times, he was moved by pity, felt compassion, and experienced fear, sadness, and even despair. In this Gospel story, he is deeply disturbed, and he weeps at the death of his friend Lazarus. Jesus was God in human form, but he experienced feelings and reactions typical to all of us.

As a good Jew, Jesus knew the Psalms well, and he quoted them freely. For example, he cried out to God from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mt 27:46) which is taken directly from Psalm 22:1. Like the psalmists, Jesus trusted that God could handle the unedited versions of what he was thinking and feeling.

The story also shows us that the human Jesus could handle the unedited versions of what other people were thinking and feeling—he does not chide Mary for her blunt accusation “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

We do ourselves a disservice if we think we have to deny our true feelings to come before God. If we believe God knows us better than we know ourselves, we can’t hide what we are feeling anyway. So let’s give God the benefit of the doubt and trust that God can work with whatever we bring in its most raw form, just as Mary brought her honest response to Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.

- ① What emotions do you find it hardest to believe that Jesus also experienced? Why?
- ② Do you find it helpful to think of Jesus in human terms experiencing the full range of human emotions? Why or why not?
- ③ What emotions or feelings might these readings and reflections be inviting you to admit and express more fully in this coming week: to yourself, a trusted friend, or to God?

Closing Prayer

Pray the following aloud together:

Jesus, may what we have heard and discussed today inspire us to leave here committed to living as more faithful disciples.

Amen.