

April 2, 2017

**Fifth Sunday of Lent**

**Thus says the Lord:** *“O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them and bring you back to the land of Israel. I will put my Spirit in you that you may live. I have promised and I will do it,”* says the Lord.

The above quote summarizes today’s Gospel in which Jesus commands, *“Untie Lazarus and let him go.” Untie him, and let him go! Untie her, and let her go!* We all long to hear this, don’t we - *Untie me and let me go!*

Untie from what? From whatever discourages us, angers us, frightens us, lessens us in any way. Whatever discourages us, angers us, frightens us, lessens us, resists where God’s Spirit in us is trying to take us - into forgiveness, comfort, courage, peace.

We held this past week a Lenten Penance Service to help loosen whatever the binds are that tie us. I realize for many of you, your time is already committed on these nights. Because of this, I thought we could hold a reconciliation service for you here today to make it possible for you to experience that same lifting of whatever it is that may be holding you down, of having untied whatever it is that keeps you from going free.

**Lenten Communal Penance Service**

**Opening prayer:** Jesus our brother, we come to you know travel-worn because all our roads though momentarily attractive have ended in bankruptcy.

**Leader:** May we receive the forgiveness of God. Ours is a tremendous God. Totally uncontainable. As expansive as all earth and sky. All glory and honor to him forever. Amen.

For this service we are joined by two realities: our sinfulness, and the love of God. Let us reflect together and alone on the words and images of this service. Let us search for the sinfulness we want to root out of our lives. In our examination of conscience, let us know ourselves as Jesus knows us. In our confession, let us tell God our innermost need to be reconciled, to turn back to him and to be renewed. Freed from the weight of our sins and sinfulness – we celebrate God's forgiveness in our mutual praise and gratitude.

**Leader:** Dear brothers and sisters gathered here together, the great Lord God calls us with a mighty and gentle voice. He calls us to conversion. To turn away from all that is not his way. To turn into all that is of his Spirit. Mindful of this, let us now seek from our Father the share in his life of grace we need to repent sincerely. Let us please join in praying for our personal and community forgiveness. The response to each of the following intercessions is: "*Give me your love and your grace.*"

**Leader:** Take, Lord, receive all I have and possess.

**All:** *Give me only your love and your grace.*

**Leader:** You have given all to me; now I return it,

**All:** *Give me only your love and your grace.*

**Leader:** Take care, Lord, receive; all is yours for now.

**All:** *Give me only your love and your grace.*

**Leader:** Dispose of it, wholly according to her your will

**All:** *Give me only your love and your grace.*

**Leader:** Let us pray to our Father who so loves us. Who so wished to reconcile himself that he sent his only Son to bring us home to him.

**Leader and All:** Our Father . . .

**Leader:** Lord, be to us as the cool refreshing stream which brings nourishment to thirsty roots. You are enough for us, give us only your love and your grace.

**Thus says the Lord:** "*O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them and bring you back to the land of Israel. I will put my Spirit in you that you may live. I have promised and I will do it,*" says the Lord.