

# Dear Padre,

*I've offered many Masses for wife and family, thinking if perhaps they are in Purgatory, it would help shorten their time. How can we tell if our prayers and Masses are beneficial? How do we know?*

It has been a long- and well-established expression of Catholic faith and practice to pray for the departed. Our prayers help us as we grieve and mourn the passing of the people we love. Our prayers help us keep their passing in perspective—not as the end of something, but rather as the beginning of new life in Christ. This is beneficial and needs no further evidence to illustrate the value of the practice.

Your question, on the other hand, goes beyond what the tradition emphasizes. It seems like you are seeking some sort of guarantee or warranty, which you assume will be reassuring. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee or warranty either promised or implied in this spiritual practice. In death, indeed in the whole of Christian life, we bump up against mystery, not certitude. We are invited to enter into the mystery. To grow in the mystery. To be graced by the mystery. Nothing more is possible. We hope because we believe. We believe because we practice what we hope for. ●



RENATA SEDMAKOVA / SHUTTERSTOCK

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR / DearPadre.org

## Monday

MARCH 23

Lenten Weekday  
Dn 13:1–9, 15–17,  
19–30, 33–62 or  
13:41c–62  
Jn 8:1–11

## Tuesday

MARCH 24

Lenten Weekday  
Nm 21:4–9  
Jn 8:21–30

## Wednesday

MARCH 25

The Annunciation  
of the Lord  
Is 7:10–14; 8:10  
Heb 10:4–10  
Lk 1:26–38

## Thursday

MARCH 26

Lenten Weekday  
Gn 17:3–9  
Jn 8:51–59

## Friday

MARCH 27

Lenten Weekday  
Jer 20:10–13  
Jn 10:31–42

## Saturday

MARCH 28

Lenten Weekday  
Ez 37:21–28  
Jn 11:45–56

## Sunday

MARCH 29

Palm Sunday of the  
Passion of the Lord  
Mt 21:1–11  
Is 50:4–7  
Phil 2:6–11  
Mt 26:14–27:66 or  
27:11–54

### Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to [DearPadre.org](http://DearPadre.org) to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.



FAUSTO RENDA / SHUTTERSTOCK

## A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

*A very widespread ailment of our time is the fatigue of living: reality seems to us to be too complex, burdensome, difficult to face. And so, we switch off, we fall asleep.... But reality has to be faced.... Let us go to Jesus: he can heal us; he can revive us. Jesus is our hope!*

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME, JUNE 25, 2025

# Our Parish COMMUNITY

March 22, 2026

Fifth Sunday of Lent (A)

Ezekiel 37:12–14 / Romans 8:8–11 / John 11:1–45 or 11:3–7, 17, 20–27, 33b–45



## I Am the Resurrection

ANN M. GARRIDO

The prophets before Jesus had long spoken of God's dreams for our world. In seasons of darkness and despair, they would offer snapshots of hope for what it would be like in the "kingdom of God." Those who were blind would see. Those unable to walk would dance. Those imprisoned would be free. And those who had died would be raised to life again.

In today's gospel, we hear that Martha shared in the prophets' hope. When Jesus tells her that her brother Lazarus will rise, she replies, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." In other words, Martha believes in the coming "kingdom of God." But then, Jesus stuns her with his response: "I am the resurrection and the life." That is, "I am the kingdom of God."

Origen of Alexandria—a third-century theologian—spoke of Jesus as the *autobasileia*. The term comes from two Greek words: *auto*, meaning "self," and *basileia*, meaning "kingdom." It was his way of expressing that Jesus was the fulfillment of all that the prophets had preached. He was all of God's dreams for us manifest, not as had been anticipated in a future time, but in a living person.

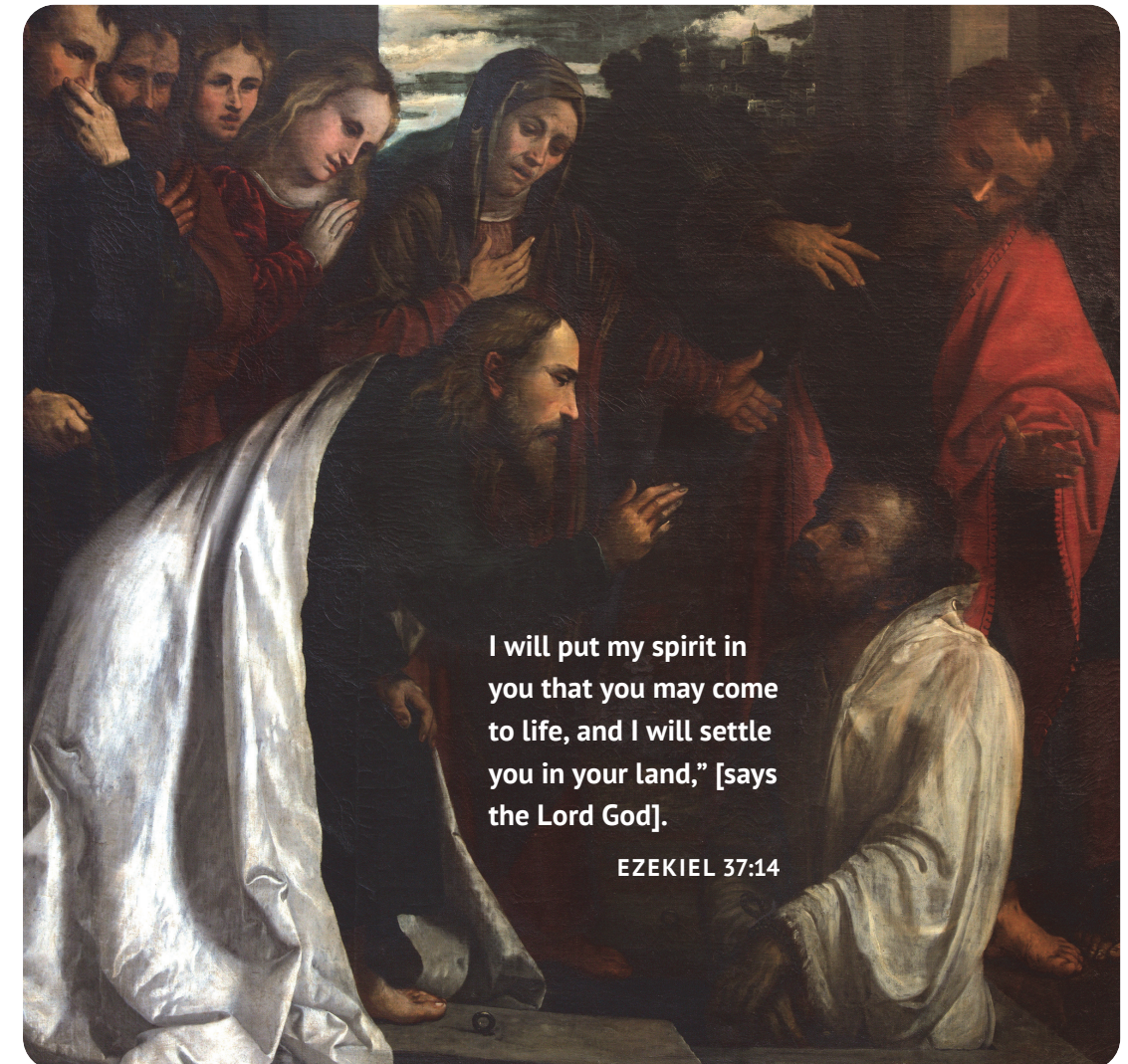
We still wait for God's dreams to be realized on a global scale, but, like Martha, we have seen what that realization will look like already in our experience of Jesus. With Martha, we can confess that he is "the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." ●

### Reflect

Where do I see signs or snapshots of the kingdom of God?



LEARN ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF OUR PARISH COMMUNITY



I will put my spirit in you that you may come to life, and I will settle you in your land," [says the Lord God].

EZEKIEL 37:14