

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 17, 2024



The Greeks likely were preparing to accept the Covenant of Abraham, yet Jesus will draw all humanity to Himself, by "dying like the grain of wheat" and then by being "lifted up."
The Feast of Passover & Unleavened Bread commemorated the dying of the Paschal Lamb and the Israelite's release from the bondage of Egypt.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

Holyday Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

Confessions: First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

Department Telephone: 508.363.6246

Chapel Website: www.ourladyofprovidence.net

MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, March 16 *Vigil of the 5th Sunday of Lent*

4:00pm +Madeline Sullivan

Sunday, March 17 *Fifth Sunday of Lent*

7:30am +John & Mary Murray by their family

4:00pm +Madeline Sullivan

Monday, March 18 *Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop & doctor*²

12:00nn Seeking saintly intercession for a beloved son

Tuesday, March 19 *Solemnity of Saint Joseph, spouse of the BVM*

12:00nn For the OCDS community of Saint Joseph

Wednesday, March 20

12:00nn Seeking God's help for Caid and Max

Thursday, March 21

12:00nn +Violet Badgio Kulbabinski

Friday, March 22 *Day of Abstinence*

11:30am Stations of the Cross

12:00nn +Cheryl Speed

Saturday, March 23 *Vigil of the Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion*

4:00pm For the honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus & the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Sunday, March 24 *Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord*

7:30am For a special intention

4:00pm +Michael Bernardi

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday* is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. **Solemnities** honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. **Feasts** must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. **Memorials** are of two types: Either the observance is an **obligatory memorial**¹ or an **optional memorial**².

Toward a Better Understanding of the Gospels of Lent

Saint John's Gospel begins and ends the Lord's public activity in the same way: within the framework of a week or "six days before the Passover" (Jn 12:1). This week's Gospel notes that some Greeks were participating in the Passover and wanted to see Jesus. The incident is the summit of chapters 11 and 12 of that Gospel. Earlier, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn 11:1-54) and already been anointed in Bethany (Jn 11:55-12:11). Those two incidents were followed by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Jn 12:12-19). Then comes this week's Gospel (Jn 12:20-33) followed by oblique references to the Cross and its glory (Jn 12:33-36). Those two chapters conclude with an epilogue on the conditions necessary for true faith (Jn 12:37-50). The Greek-speaking pilgrims make the first overture by coming to Philip, who likewise had come "from Bethsaida in Galilee." They said to him, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." He went to Andrew with the request and both of them, went and told Jesus. Though technically pagans, it is likely that those Greeks belonged to a class of foreigners characterized as God-fearers (Gk. φοβούμενος). Since their presence in Jerusalem implied they were sympathetic to Jewish belief and practice, but being uncircumcised, they were not fully integrated into Judaism, yet different from Gentile proselytes. Those God-fearers or *phrobomenoi* are the prototype of all others who would hear the Gospel and be disposed to believing in Jesus as the Risen Son of God. In asking to see Jesus, their request was more than merely catching a glimpse of Him since that was something they could have done on their own. In the Johannine vocabulary, the verb *to see* (Gk. ὁρᾶω) often means not simply human sight, but to spiritually see or, better yet, to believe. On the morning of the Resurrection, "the other disciple...the one who had arrived at the tomb first...saw and believed" (Jn 20:8). These God-fearing Greeks (Acts 10:2) were likely asking for the gift of faith. Philip, hailing from Bethsaida, probably spoke Greek, too. Present at the Passover feast, they obviously knew about the coming Messiah as a result of their interest in Judaism, so, these God-fearers had gone beyond merely being pagans. It's conceivable that they had even witnessed Jesus' triumphal entry into the Holy City. Their request to see Him also indicates that they weren't satisfied with merely being Jewish proselytes and, so, wanted to go deeper. Faith in Christ is only gradually acquired and, then, its deepening must take place within like-minded people or the Church. To truly see Jesus, it is necessary to be led to Christ by an apostle or by the apostolic faith. Founded upon the faith of the apostles, such eyewitness testimony is what constitutes the bedrock of faith. The incident ends abruptly with nothing being said about how Jesus responded to their request. These God-fearers attest to the fact that faith in Christ is open to all, whether pagan or Jew, who want to

Saint Ignatius of Antioch — *Epistula ad Romanos*

Nothing you can see has real value. Our God Jesus Christ, indeed, has revealed himself more clearly by returning to the Father. The greatness of Christianity lies in its being hated by the world, not in its being convincing to it. I am corresponding with all the churches and bidding them all realize that I am voluntarily dying for God—if, that is, you do not interfere. I plead with you, do not do me an unseasonable kindness. Let me be fodder for wild beasts—that is how I get to God I am God's wheat and I am being ground by the teeth of wild beasts to make a pure loaf for Christ. I would rather that you fawn on the beasts so that they may be my tomb and no scrap of my body be left. Thus, when I have fallen asleep, I shall be a burden to no one. Then I shall be a real disciple of Jesus Christ when the world see my body no more. Pray Christ for me that by these means I may become God's sacrifice.

see or believe. What follows this incident is the commentary Jesus Himself makes on the matter. He links this exchange on who can have faith in connection with the arrival of the hour of His glory. From the earliest portion of the Fourth Gospel, on several occasions, Jesus mentions *the hour* toward which He was walking. He never loses sight of that definitive point in the future – in the Gospel, that hour is the time “for the Son of Man to be glorified.” This long-delayed hour is the time of Christ's passover or the time of His passion, death, resurrection and ascension back to glory. This time-altering hour is the reason why Jesus came, the consummation of the mission given to Him by the Father that He both longs for and fears. This will be the ultimate moment when Jesus will draw all nations to Himself. Lifted high on the cross, for all to see and to gaze upon Him, by seeing and believing, eternal salvation is obtained. A brief parable follows. Jesus is the grain of wheat and, by dying on the Cross, His death becomes the Tree of Life from which everyone is able to receive the fruit of life. By one man's death, an innumerable multitude is saved. These references allude to the parable of the sower and the seed or that of the mustard seed. In the Book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar saw a tree in one of his dreams and Daniel interprets it to mean that his kingdom “has become so great as to touch the heavens....and [it] reaches to the end of the earth” (Dan 4:19). The Cross, standing like a Tree, after the Lord was lifted high upon it, then, from that height, Christ will draw all people to Himself. At that very hour, He becomes King of the Universe. In order to be glorified as Christ was, every disciples must lose their lives, detach themselves from worldly things, in order to “preserve [themselves] for eternal life.” Contemplating His impending death, Jesus was deeply troubled and this last section of the passage has similarities with Gethsemane. While in his passion account, John does not mention the anguish in that Garden, the memory of that agony is evoked here. He does not ask to be delivered from what was at hand, instead, Jesus said, “Father, glorify your name.” Even though conflicted, Jesus fully adheres to doing the will of the Father and is patently aware that His passion is part of the mystery. The voice of an angel is heard which publicly and divinely sanctions the Lord's impending death. In the Fourth Gospel, the name of the Father has already been glorified by the signs and wonders worked by Jesus from Cana to the raising of Lazarus. As bookends to the *magnalia Dei*, those two signs refer to the hour and to the manifestation of the Father's glory. The Cross constitutes the transfiguration of Jesus for Saint John and the heavenly voice confirms that understanding on the eve of Christ's passion. The final verses are bursting with meaning related to the mystery of Christ's Passover, which is clearly illustrated in the series of verbs the evangelist used: to judge, to lift up, to draw, to indicate, and the emphatic use of the adverb *now*. Then, the judgment of the world was seen as already happening, in two ways: Satan has been driven out and expelled into the darkness. When the hour of Jesus dawns, a boundary will be set up dividing those who stand with Jesus and those who do not. With arms stretched across its beam, Jesus draws in all humanity, even if not everyone is drawn by the Cross.

National Eucharistic Revival — the Eucharist as the Medicine of Immortality

Anyone who appears to be health is really sick, since every living thing is infected with mortality. Death is the one disease that never discriminates. It is the great equalizer! Saint Augustine laments, “Not everything grows old, but everything dies” (*Confessions*, IV.x.15). Death was not part of God's original plan for creation, so to understand its meaning, you need to glimpse what life was like for Adam and Eve before the Fall or what is prelapsarian life. As the parents of all the living, those two encompassed all of humanity and were meant to be slowly taught the life of God over time .if they had never sinned. St. Ignatius of Antioch, in his letter to the Ephesians, refers to the Eucharist as the *Medicine of Immortality* because by receiving the Body & Blood of Christ, healing is given for sins. The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's death and Resurrection. In the sacrifice of the Cross, Jesus leaves us with the gift of Salvation. The healing power of His passion, death, and resurrection are applied to the illness of mortality through the sacraments. However, only in the Eucharist do we discover a unique form of medicine. While the other sacraments convey the physician's healing power, the Eucharist contains the Physician Himself. The Eucharist is “the flesh of our savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father by his goodness raised up” (*Epistula ad Smyrnaeos* 6.2). In the Eucharist, Christ is both physician and medicine who gives Himself in a medicinal manner to strengthen and preserve the

soul from death and prepare our bodies to share in His physical resurrection. There you have the reason why St. Ignatius called the Eucharist “the medicine of immortality, the antidote we take in order not to die but to live forever in Jesus Christ” (*Epistula ad Ephesios* 20.2). For Ignatius, suffering – both Christ's and ours – is not an end in itself, but rather a bridge to eternal life. It is by our suffering that we participate in Christ's own sacrifice and through it come to the glory of his resurrection. This is why one can rightly call a death at the jaws of lions a happy and peaceful one. Instead, the peace experienced in death is derived from the sure hope that death does not have the final victory – Christ has conquered death through the Resurrection.



Catechumenal Gospel: The Rising of Lazarus - 5th Sunday of Lent

The 3rd to the 5th Sundays of Lent form a stimulating baptismal journey beginning during the first centuries of Christianity. These Gospels still are proclaimed and have particular meaning for the catechumens preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil. They have meaning for all of the baptized as we strive, with the help of God's grace, to live our baptismal promises. This remarkable extended narrative forms a turning point in the Fourth Gospel. The gospel is commonly seen as being in two halves, the *Book of Signs* running from the prologue until the raising of Lazarus, and the *Book of Glory* going from chapter 12 to chapter 21. Asked for His help by Martha and Mary, rather than focusing on the death of Lazarus, Jesus looks ahead to the ultimate solution that results in manifesting God's glory. This had also happened in the second catechumenal Gospel when He told the disciples that the man's blindness was not the result of anyone's sin but "so that the works of God might be made visible through him." (Jn 9:3). The unexpected delay in responding to the sisters' request is modified by the narrator's comment that Jesus truly loved the three members of that family. Instead, His love for them is manifested in raising Lazarus from the dead, even if the miracle was delayed. When announcing that they should go back to Judea, the disciples remind Jesus that not long before the Judeans had tried to stone Him to death. The recognition that death was likely is an anticipation of what lies ahead. By repeatedly noting that "Lazarus is asleep" and to be awakened by Jesus, along with multiple references to the man being asleep and saved versus ordinary sleep, these verses illustrate John's characteristic use of double entendre. In doing so, the variation between the literal and figurative meaning those expressions entail illustrate the difference between what Jesus understands to be true and the failure to understand what He is really saying on the part of the person or group He is engaged with. This technique is illustrated when Nicodemus does not understand the difference between *being born again* versus *being born from above*. Or in regard to when the woman at the well is confused by the distinction between *living water* versus *running water*. The double entendre technique aims to confuse the understanding of the Lord's questioners in order to force the confused to place all their trust in Him. Though not mentioned, yet assumed, the oblique reference to Thomas requires our foreknowledge that he was an apostle. The name Thomas is derived from the Aramaic word for twin. Instead of the Lord alluding to Thomas by his given name or a nickname, Didymus is the same nickname in Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek. By its mid-passage, Jesus arrives in Bethany and, at that point, "...Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days." The reference to four days is more than an explanation of how long Jesus was delayed because according to the Jewish Mishnah four days was when it was certain that a person was dead. Due to the warm climate, bodily decay would have been so advanced, as to prevent confident identification. The proximity of Bethany to Jerusalem—a little more than six miles—means that the holy city was about a forty-minute short walk. All that lay just beyond the horizon over the Mount of Olives, as Jesus' own death and rising are just over the narrative horizon. Martha, now being the senior member of the household, comes out to greet Jesus. Her

opening words 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died' are ambiguous, highlighting the complexity of the emotions surrounding grief. As the conversation unfolds, it becomes clearer that for Martha these words are a statement of fact or even faith, which contains a further implicit request. When those same words are repeated by Mary later on (Jn 11:32), they take on the sense of a grieving rebuke. Responding to Jesus' promise of hope, Martha articulates a common Jewish belief in the resurrection of the dead on the final Day of the Lord. As earlier, Jesus claims that this eschatological future hope has become real, now, in His own person and earthly life. After revealing that He is the resurrection and life, Jesus challenges Martha saying, "Do you believe this?" The challenge leads her into greater trust, and she expresses her belief in Jesus as Messiah in a way that parallels what the Samaritan woman did at the well (Jn 4:25, 29). The company of Jews who likely had come from Jerusalem shows that Lazarus was respected, but they also function as witnesses. Another mention of the Jews functions to express the ambiguity of the reaction and division that Jesus provokes. Some of those bystanders see His compassion, yet others, who appear to believe that Jesus really did heal the man born blind are still skeptical. While Martha went to greet Jesus out of social duty, Mary only rises to meet Him out of a personal response after she heard that Jesus had been asking for her. Where Jesus has met Martha's statement of half-developed belief with an invitation to believe more fully, now, He meets Mary's emotions with an emotion of His own. In this gospel, though Jesus is more clearly divine in nature as the Word who was with God and the one who has "come from the Father and is going to the Father," He is at the same time more explicitly human and vulnerable than in the other three gospels. In verse 34, where Jesus asks where Lazarus has been laid, is the only time in this gospel where the Lord asks a question to which He appears not to know the answer. It is clear, as He walks to the tomb, that He walks closely alongside those who feel the grief at their loss. The verse divisions in the New Testament opted to give the simple expression of grief and calamity its very own verse, "Jesus wept" (Jn 11:35). After being ridiculed by some bystanders and ordering the stone before the tomb to be removed, Jesus prays to God and addresses God as Father, a divine title common both in John and Matthew. A title not unknown in Jewish devotion, God as Father was used in the context of confession and request for forgiveness. The intimacy with which Jesus calls God Father is distinctive—and for Paul becomes the new-birthright of all who trust in Jesus (Rom 8:14–17). Lazarus, the man who had been dead for four days comes out walking! Dead people cannot walk—unless Jesus has spoken new life into them! The only qualification for experiencing Resurrection is to be dead in the first place. Thus, the invitation *come out* is addressed to all: Come out from the tomb of your own self interest, emerge from the darkness of your insecurities and petty jealousies! Come out into the sunshine of God's grace and breath again the air of life where there is no fear of death! Unwrap those signs of death and defeat which constrict you and prevent you from living life in all its fullness!

Excerpted from Ian Paul "The raising of Lazarus in John 11"
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