

- Have you ever been given a second chance at a relationship, a job, a decision, a dream? How did you use the opportunity? What would you do differently or the same if you had it to do again?
- Has anyone ever asked you for a second chance? How did you respond?
- Is there a part of your life at the moment that feels like a tomb? Bring the image *Weeping Women of Jerusalem* to sit with you there. What do you hope at this moment? Is there someone who can help you live into that hope? Call or write to them and ask for the help you need.

# Lent 5: Rock

John 11:1-45

Additional passages: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11

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*As individuals and as a gathered people we are called from the tomb and from the valley of dry bones to re-formation and re-connection with God's empowering Spirit. But we have to say,*

*"Yes." We have to be willing to risk life.*

– Andrea La Sonde Anastos

## Gather & Center

Prepare the worship table with a candle and a bowl filled with rocks. When everyone is gathered, light the candle and start the Lent 5 segment of the video, joining in the following prayer. Pause the video as directed or whenever you wish to take time for discussion.

Sorrowing God,  
 you invite us to gather with all who weep:  
 with Martha and Mary and the friends of Lazarus,  
 with parents and children, stunned by starvation,  
 with Israeli and Palestinian keening over the same scattered fragments,  
 with the newly bereaved, the frightened, the abused, the violated;  
 to gather all the tears unshed for our own griefs  
 and pour them out like baptismal water  
 drowning all that separates us, one from another.

## Enter & Engage

Before restarting the video, read aloud John 11:1-45. Pause the video for discussion as you wish.

## Ask Yourself

Use these questions and suggestions to invite discussion, prayer, and reflection.

1. The gospel lesson suggests that we think seriously about what it means to raise someone from the dead and what it means to *be raised* from death. Every day in emergency rooms, in ambulances, at accident scenes, on operating tables, CPR or a defibrillator starts a silent heart beating again. Is that any different from Jesus calling Lazarus out of the tomb? If so, what makes it different?
2. Persons who survive a near-death experience frequently return from that event with a heightened awareness not only of their own mortality but of the almost heart-breaking sweetness of life. A high percentage of them choose to reconfigure their lives in order to witness on behalf of justice, peace, compassion, and hope, or to accomplish some particular task. Is there something in your own life to which you would like to give more attention? Somewhere you need to let go?
3. Have you taken the time to contemplate your own, inevitable death? Have you made the necessary preparations? Do you have a will, and have you noted your wishes regarding organ donation? Have you appointed guardians for underage children? Have you thought about your own funeral and shared with friends or family the readings and hymns you would like? If not, attend to one of those tasks this week. Pay attention to the feelings and thoughts that stir in you.

4. Read Ezekiel 37:1-14. The lessons from both Ezekiel and John are, among other things, about second chances. Pause and consider a “second chance” that is being offered right here and now to do, say, write, pray, build, create, something that you have been putting off. How do you feel when you think about engaging with that second chance?

## Ponder & Pray

Gather near the worship table. Invite each person to take a rock, sharing a time when a stone was rolled away from in front of them, or when someone lifted a burden from them. Allow a moment of silence; then take leave of the image *Weeping Women of Jerusalem* and pray the following in unison.

Your hands give strength to all the hands that roll away stones.  
Be my strength today as I am called  
to roll away the stone of oppression  
and raise the banners of justice and liberation,  
to roll away the stone of violence  
and bind the wounds of the war-burdened,  
to roll away the stone of hunger  
and cast the seeds of fruitful harvests,  
to roll away the stone of abandonment  
and wrap the dying in linen promises.

## Another Step

During this week, huddle with the image *Weeping Women of Jerusalem* and let these women be your companions. Read the lections assigned for this Fifth Sunday in Lent (see p. 1). Add a rock to your sacred space. Hold it when you pray and set it beside you when you journal.