

Pflaum **VISIONS**

Jesus Risks His Life for His Friends

FRIENDS & FEELINGS

Check the feelings you have experienced in your friendships.

Lonely when a friend moves away.

Frustrated when a friend doesn't want to come over.

Happy when I go somewhere with a friend.

Sad when a friend is sick.

Excited when we play on a winning team together.

Satisfied when we collect food for a food bank together.

Hurt when a friend talks about me.

Betrayed when I see friends on Instagram having fun without me.

Encouraged when a friend sticks up for me.

Worried when a friend seems depressed and distant.

In the weeks during Lent, we walk alongside Jesus and witness his strength, his healing power, and his bravery. For each of the following Gospels, challenge yourself to think of specific ways you can be like Jesus today.

On the **FIRST** Sunday of Lent, Jesus is tempted by the Devil in the desert. Think of a habit you have worked to change during Lent. How does Jesus help you avoid temptation? How do your friends help you to make good choices?

On the **SECOND** Sunday of Lent, Jesus' friends see a shining vision of him. In this image, Jesus reveals his true self. How do you share your most authentic self with others?

On the **THIRD** Sunday of Lent, Jesus shares the Good News with a Samaritan woman. How do you reach out to people who have been rejected? Who has included you?

On the **FOURTH** Sunday of Lent, Jesus heals a man born blind. Think about the things you view online. Are they positive words and pictures? What do you do if you see negative, false, or inappropriate posts?



CARLO ACUTIS:

The Saint Who Played Video Games

Carlo Acutis spent his days like many teenagers—going to school, hanging out with friends, and playing video games. But a few things set Carlo apart. He went to Mass every day. He taught himself computer programming and built a website from scratch. But one thing set Carlo apart more than anything else. He was dying of leukemia.

He is known today by some people as the “Future Saint of the Internet.” Carlo was born in London on May 3, 1991. Soon after his birth, Carlo’s parents returned to their native Italy, to the city of Milan, to raise him. His mother, Antonia, says that when Carlo was young, she was not very involved in the church. But Carlo began asking her questions about God, which she says made her reflect more on her Catholic faith.

After making his First Communion, Carlo asked to go to Mass every day. Eventually, he asked if he could arrive early or stay after, so he could pray in front of the tabernacle. He also prayed the Rosary daily and celebrated the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation often. “My life plan is to always be connected with Jesus,” he said.

By the time he was in high school, Carlo had taught himself advanced computer skills in programming, movie editing, and website creation. He even learned how to edit and lay out comic books. But Carlo didn’t



spend all of his time in front of screens. Friends say that he was a person who stood up to bullies who picked on weaker students. Carlo also went out of his way to spend extra time with friends who were going through family difficulties such as divorces.

More than anything, Carlo loved the Eucharist, calling it “my highway to Heaven.”

He developed an interest in eucharistic miracles, and when he turned eleven, he began researching and cataloging them.

Carlo’s family traveled frequently, and Carlo especially liked visiting Assisi, Italy, the hometown of Saint Francis. After being diagnosed with leukemia, Carlo asked his parents to take him on pilgrimages to the sites of the eucharistic miracles that he found so captivating. But as Carlo grew sicker, the travel stopped.

And then, Carlo had another idea. Instead of keeping track of these miracles for himself, he

turned his research on more than 136 eucharistic miracles from around the world into a virtual museum website. On the homepage, he wrote: “The more Eucharist we receive, the more we will become like Jesus, so that on this earth we will have a foretaste of Heaven.”

As Carlo became sicker, his suffering grew more intense.

When a doctor asked about his suffering, Carlo is reported to have replied, “There are people who suffer much more than me!”

Carlo died in Monza, Italy, on October 12, 2006. He was fifteen years old. Since his death, several groups have worked together to maintain his website, which has become so popular that it’s been turned into a traveling exhibition. The photographs and descriptions of eucharistic miracles are downloaded and enlarged to make high-definition posters and wall-sized panels. The exhibition has traveled to parishes and dioceses all over the world.

Soon after Carlo’s death, people began calling for sainthood for the teenager.

In 2018, Pope Francis declared Carlo Venerable, one of the first steps in the canonization process. Pope Francis was so impressed by Carlo’s life story that he mentioned Carlo in his 2019 letter to the youth of the world. Pope Francis wrote:

“I remind you of the good news we received as a gift on the



Carlos visited many of the sites of eucharistic miracles before his illness kept him from traveling.

morning of the resurrection: that in all the dark or painful situations... there is a way out. For example, it is true that the digital world can expose you to the risk of self-absorption, isolation, and empty pleasure. But don't forget that there are young people even there who show creativity and even genius. That was the case with the Venerable Carlo Acutis."

The Holy Father went on to say that Carlo "knew how to use the new communications technology to transmit the Gospel, to communicate values and beauty."

Rather than falling into the trap of consumerism, Pope Francis said, Carlo shows us how to share the many gifts God has given us. He quoted Carlo, who once said, "Everyone is born as an original, but many people end up dying as photocopies."

"You can become what God your Creator knows you are, if only you realize that you are called to something greater," Pope Francis said. "Ask the help of the Holy Spirit and confidently aim for the great goal of holiness. In this way, you will not be a photocopy. You will be fully yourself."



Many people want Carlos to be declared a saint. Think about the saints you have studied this year or others you know. How are their lives similar to Carlos's life?

What is a eucharistic miracle? Eucharistic miracles are ways that God acts to strengthen our belief in the presence of Jesus' Body and Blood in the Eucharist. One of the most famous of these is the miracle at Lanciano, Italy, in A.D. 750, when a priest saw the consecrated bread and wine at Mass become actual flesh and blood. The relics are still in existence today in the Sanctuary of the Eucharistic Miracle in Lanciano, Italy.



To view Carlo's virtual museum of eucharistic miracles, visit miracolieucaristici.org.

What's next for Carlo on the road to sainthood? Every soul in Heaven is a saint, but the Church recognizes certain people as models of faith, holiness, or heroic virtue by naming them saints. The long and complex process called canonization can take many years. At each step, a candidate for sainthood is assigned a title:

- Servant of God
- Venerable
- Blessed
- Saint

The next step for Venerable Carlo is to be named Blessed. For this to happen, a miracle based on Carlo's intercession, or help, will need to be verified. Once Carlo is declared Blessed, he can be officially honored in his hometown of Milan. A second miracle is needed for him to be declared a saint.

TALK

- 1** Reflect on Jesus' words, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). What does it mean that Carlo called the Eucharist "my highway to Heaven"?
- 2** Carlo used technology to spread the Gospel. With your class, brainstorm some ways you can use a cell phone to spread the Gospel this summer.
- 3** Carlo spent his life as an "original," not as a "photocopy." Reflect on the ways that you live as an original and as a photocopy.
- 4** Carlo said his life plan was to always be connected to Jesus. What plans do you have this summer that will connect you to Jesus?



SUNDAY GOSPEL

5th Sunday of Lent

John 11:1-45

Martha and Mary Believe in Jesus

Scene 1

Narrator: As this story begins, a man named Lazarus from Bethany is seriously ill. He is the brother of the woman named Mary, the one who poured perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. Lazarus has another sister named Martha. They are good friends of Jesus. Martha and Mary write to Jesus.

Martha: Let's keep it simple. Just say, "Lord, your friend is sick."

Scene 2

Narrator: Many officials in Jerusalem were very angry with Jesus. They thought his teachings were dangerous, so Jesus and his disciples had left the city for a while. But Jesus got the letter from Martha and Mary.

Jesus: Lazarus's illness won't end in death. Instead, it will bring glory to God because it will show the glory of the Son of God.

Narrator: So Jesus stayed where he was for two days. Then he suddenly spoke to his followers.

Jesus: Let us go back into Judea.

Followers: Only a few days ago, people were trying to stone you to death. You can't go back there.

Jesus: Lazarus has fallen asleep. I am going to wake him.

Followers: Lord, if he is asleep, he will be all right.

Jesus: Let me tell you plainly: Lazarus has died. I'm glad I wasn't there because now, maybe, you will learn to believe in me. Let's go.

Thomas: Come on. Let us go along and die with Jesus.

Scene 3

Narrator: Jesus got to Bethany four days after Lazarus's funeral. Many mourners from Jerusalem were still there.

Servant: Martha, your friend Jesus is coming. He should be here soon.

Martha: I'll go and meet him.

Please tell Mary I'll be right back.

Narrator: Martha walked down the road until she met Jesus.

Martha: If only you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that, even now, God will give you whatever you ask.

Jesus: Your brother will rise again.

Martha: I know that he will rise again on the last day.

Jesus: I am the resurrection and the life. People who believe in me will live, even though they must taste death. And people who are alive and believe in me will never die at all. Do you believe that?

Martha: Yes, Jesus. I do believe that you are Christ, the Son of God, the one we have been waiting for.

Scene 4

Narrator: Martha went back in the house and spoke to Mary:

Martha: Mary, Jesus is here and wants to see you.

Narrator: When their friends from Jerusalem saw Mary jump up and leave quickly, they followed her. They thought she was going to Lazarus's tomb to mourn. Instead, they saw her go up to Jesus and kneel down before him, weeping.

Mary: If you had only been here, Lazarus wouldn't have died.



and DOCTRINE

Connecting GOSPEL

Jesus Promises Us Life Forever

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus risks his life to visit his friends Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Raising Lazarus gives us a hint about Jesus' even greater future—his Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

When Jesus gives his life for us, he is raised up to God's right hand. Jesus promises Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and all of us who believe in him that he will give us life with God forever. Jesus tells Martha, "I am the resurrection and

the life." We believe that "it is Jesus himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in him" (CCC, 994).

When God raises Jesus from the dead, he shows us the future of all who believe in Jesus. God does more than restore Jesus to life the way Lazarus was restored to life in Sunday's Gospel. Jesus' Resurrection raised him to God's right hand. The new life the Risen Jesus promises us is the very life of God.

1 Jesus risks his life for his friends. Working with a partner, make a list of people you know who help others even if they put their own safety at risk.

2 How does Jesus' love for his friends inspire you?



Ezekiel Speaks in Visions and Actions

Jesus: I am distressed too. Where have you put him?

Mary: Come and see.

First Group of Mourners: Look, Jesus is crying too. See how much he loved Lazarus.

Second Group of Mourners: He opened a blind man's eyes. Why didn't he keep his friend from dying?

Scene 5

Narrator: They all arrived at the tomb. It was a cave in a rock with a big stone blocking the entrance.

Jesus: Take away the stone.

Martha: But he has been dead four days. There will be a smell.

Jesus: Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see what wonders God can do? Now, take the stone away.

Narrator: So they rolled the stone away. Jesus raised his eyes.

Jesus: Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I say this so that people here may believe that you have sent me. And now, Lazarus, come out!

Narrator: Lazarus, the dead man, walked out of the tomb with the burial cloths still wrapped around him.

Jesus: Untie him and let him go.

Narrator: Many of the people who had come with Mary and seen what Jesus began to believe in him.

TALK

- 1 How do Mary and Martha feel when Lazarus gets sick?
- 2 How does Jesus feel when he learns Lazarus is sick?
- 3 How is Thomas feeling when he agrees to go with Jesus?
- 4 What does Martha believe about Jesus?
- 5 Find out what happens to Jesus because of raising up Lazarus in John 11:46–53.

God called Ezekiel to be a prophet when the People of Israel were in exile in Babylon. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar took Ezekiel and some other Israelite captives to Babylon in 597 B.C. Then, ten years later, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took most able-bodied Israelites into exile.

Ezekiel tells us that the Word of God first came to him in a vision. Ezekiel sees the appearance of one like a human seated on a throne in the midst of a great storm cloud and surrounded by the fiery presence of winged, living creatures.

Also in the vision, God commands Ezekiel to read a scroll that describes all the troubles of God's people and then to eat the scroll. In this way, Ezekiel carries the troubles of the people within him and speaks with compassion to the people in exile. Ezekiel speaks for God in visions and symbolic actions.

Read Ezekiel 37:12–14, Sunday's First Reading, which is part of Ezekiel's vision of the field of dry bones.

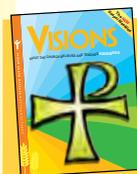
In this vision, God commands Ezekiel to walk through a field scattered with bones from human skeletons and speak to them. The bones stand for the People of Israel, who are dead as a people because of their faithlessness to God.

Ezekiel brings these exiles the message that only God can bring them back to life. But God promises to do this. God can put muscle on their bones so they can stand again. God can raise them from their graves, breathe life into them again, and bring them to their land.

- Describe times in history when other peoples have been so destroyed that they are like a field of dried bones.

- Why do you think the Church chooses this Old Testament reading to go with the Gospel about the raising of Lazarus?

- Who needs the Spirit of God to raise them up today? Why?



Jesus' actions in the Gospels reveal his mission—to proclaim God's reign and to reveal God's love. Turn to page 11 in *What the Church Believes and Teaches* to review the mission of Jesus.

God loves us so much that he sent his only Son to be with us. Jesus expresses his love in the Gospels for Lent. In the Sacrament of Matrimony, a couple commits to Jesus' mission—to build up the People of God. Turn to page 26 to learn about the graces a couple receives through this sacrament.

How Does It Feel to Be at

Form groups of four. Each person will choose to become one of the four main characters of the Gospel—Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Jesus.

Review the Gospel on pages 4–5 together. Take notes. Think about what each person in the Gospel felt, saw, and believed. Write key words,

actions, and feelings in the note-taking spaces for each character below. There are no right or wrong ways to become your character. You don't have to tell everything that happens in the story—just the most important parts.

Prepare to tell your story in the first person, using the

pronoun *I*. For example, “One day I started to feel really sick.” Or “I feel scared. I think my brother is going to die.”

Practice telling your story to your small group. Then gather as a class to celebrate the Prayer Drama. Each person will speak as one character during the prayer service.

MARTHA



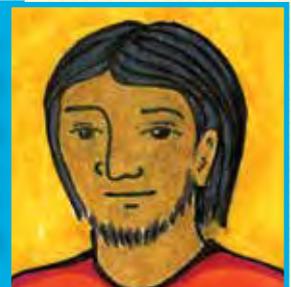


MARY

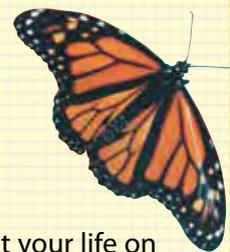
LAZARUS



JESUS



Lazarus's Tomb?



Prayer Drama

Leader 1: Let's imagine that we are standing at the grave where we have buried someone we love—a friend, a parent, a neighbor. This is the scene in Sunday's Gospel. Martha and Mary have buried their brother, Lazarus. Now they stand with their friend Jesus at the grave.

MARTHA SPEAKS

Leader 1: Martha, we know that you went out to talk to Jesus. Tell us what you talked about.

Those telling the story from Martha's point of view take turns recalling what has happened, what Jesus said, and how they feel. Don't worry about any repetitions.

MARY SPEAKS

Leader 2: Mary, will you share what you and Jesus talked about? Please tell us what it is like for you standing here at your brother's grave.

Those telling the story from Mary's point of view will take turns recalling what has happened and how they feel.

LAZARUS SPEAKS

Leader 2: Lazarus, can we hear from you? Tell us when you got sick and how you felt.

Storytellers now share Lazarus's point of view.

JESUS SPEAKS

Leader 1: Jesus, we wonder why you didn't come right away when you heard your friend Lazarus was sick. Why do the officials think you are dangerous? How do you feel now when you are here with Mary and Martha at Lazarus's grave?

Storytellers now share Jesus' point of view.

PRAY

Leader 2: Let us celebrate who Jesus is.

Girls: Jesus, you cried at the tomb of your friend.

All: You are the resurrection and the life.

Boys: Jesus, you raised Lazarus from his tomb.

All: You are the resurrection and the life.

Girls: Jesus, you put your life on the line to help your friends.

All: You are the resurrection and the life.

Boys: Jesus, God raised you from the dead.

All: You will raise us up on the last day.

Leader 1: We know all living things must die. Lazarus died. Jesus died. Let us remember or name people we love who have died.

Take turns naming people you know or know of who have died.

Leader 2: Jesus raised up Lazarus. God raised up Jesus. We, too, will be raised to life with God, our family, and our loved ones.

All: Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

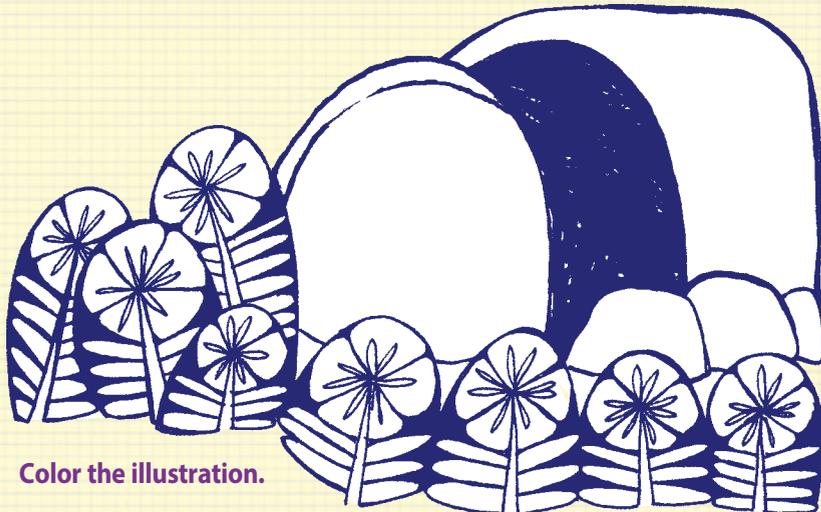


Play and sing "Song of the Body of Christ" (Venture/Visions Music CD, CD-1, #14).

Catholic

FAITH WORD

RESURRECTION Jesus' passage from death to new life three days after his Crucifixion. The Resurrection is the most important truth of the Christian faith.



Color the illustration.



For free at-home activities, visit

[@gospelweeklies.com/seasonal](https://gospelweeklies.com/seasonal)

Megan Gannon, Author and Engineer

When Megan Gannon visits schools, she often wonders what kids will think of her.

“I’m always a little worried that they aren’t going to like listening to a computerized voice for so long,” says the author and NASA software engineer.

Megan, who was born with cerebral palsy, is the author of *Special Saints for Special People* (Twenty-Third Publications), a book about people who led holy lives despite disabilities and health challenges. Megan shares these stories with students using a special communications device. “Because I have a severe speech impairment, I pre-program my speech and just play it for the kids. The device is completely hands-free and lets me control everything solely with my eyes. The infrared camera tracks where my eyes are looking. I usually let a few kids try it, which I’m pretty sure is what they’ll remember most.”

After her presentation, Megan says to the students,

“By now some of you are probably thinking, ‘That’s interesting, but we’re not disabled. What do these saints have to do with us?’ Well, I think each of these saints shows us all how to use the gifts that God has given us. They also show us how to go out of ourselves to help others no matter what our personal situation is.” Megan adds that everyone faces challenges of some kind. “These saints remind us what’s truly important: trust in God, friendship, faith, love for others, and perseverance.”

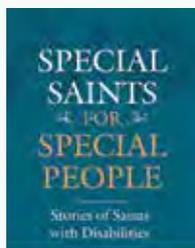
Megan says she relates to saints like Blessed Herman, a monk who was the leading expert in his time on



history, theology, math, astronomy, and other subjects—despite being born with cerebral palsy and spina bifida. “He had so many interests, and I do too. People who know me will tell you that I’m also very driven and determined. Blessed Herman also had these qualities, which is how he accomplished so much. I also love his special devotion to Our Lady.”



Students at St. Louis School in Alexandria, Virginia, ask Megan about her favorite sports teams. “I quickly realize that they want to know me as a person and really aren’t obsessed with my disability,” she says.



Writing about saints like Kateri Tekakwitha, Joseph of Cupertino, and others, Megan wants readers to realize that God gives everyone

gifts and talents. “Just because some people have a disability—or multiple disabilities—they can still contribute to their community. Every life has value. No one can say, ‘I can’t because I am different or disabled.’”

With My Family and Friends

Scan here for parent resources.



Pray

Thank you, God, for the gift of my family. I am very thankful for the love that we share. Amen.



Think

How do I show my friends and family members that I love them?



Act

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus are a close family. Spend some time with your family, taking turns telling each family member why you are thankful for him or her. Pray the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father) together and thank God for the gift of one another.