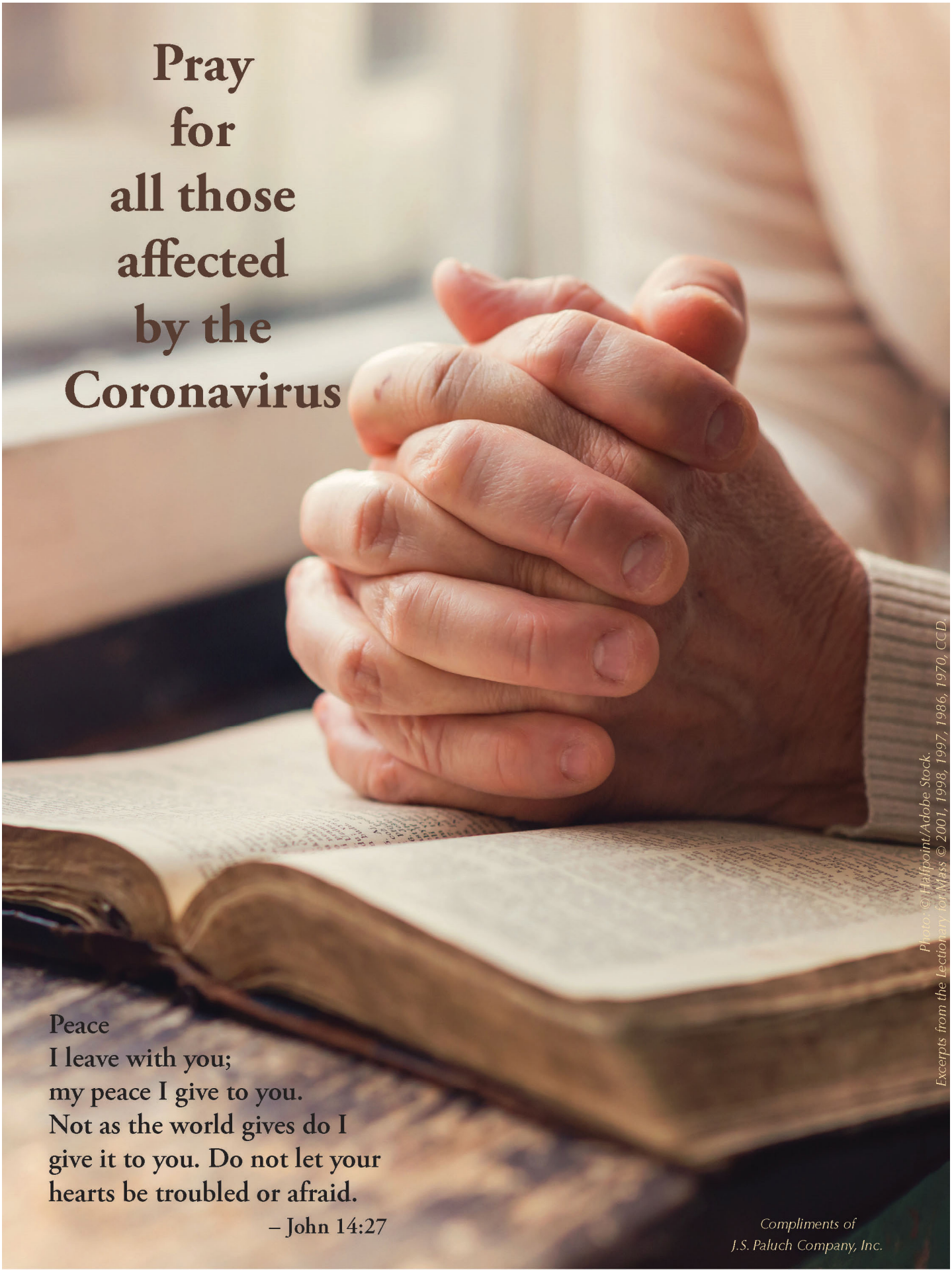

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Create a Family Prayer Space at Home

In the coming weeks, families will be spending more time together at home. One good use of this time would be to pray together on a regular basis. This prayer time together can be enhanced by creating a place in your home dedicated to prayer.

Making a place for prayer in our home can help us do what the Gospel tells us, to go into an "inner room" to pray (Matthew 6:6). Make your prayer place as quiet, uncluttered, and "desert-like" as possible. It can be the corner of a room or any unused space. Furnish your prayer place with a Bible, prayer books, cross, rosary, icons, and a candle. Encourage family members to use the prayer place for personal as well as family prayer. You can bless your place of prayer, saying:

Come, Holy God. Dwell in this place of prayer,
and bless it with your peace and presence.
Bless all who seek you here.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

If you are unable to go to Mass, one idea for prayer together is to find a resource with the prayers and reading for Sunday Mass and pray those together. Your parish may have something you can take home and use. You can find the find the readings online at www.usccb.org.

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Prayer for Health Care Workers

God of everlasting goodness,
you sent your Son among us
to bring healing, peace, and reconciliation to our weary world.
Be with all health care workers and their assistants in this time of the Coronavirus pandemic.

As they continue Jesus' ministry of care,
renew them in mind, body, and spirit.
Keep them safe from infection and illness,
and may Christ's healing presence flow through them
as they serve those entrusted to their care.

We ask this in his name,
Christ the healer,
who is Lord forever and ever.
Amen.

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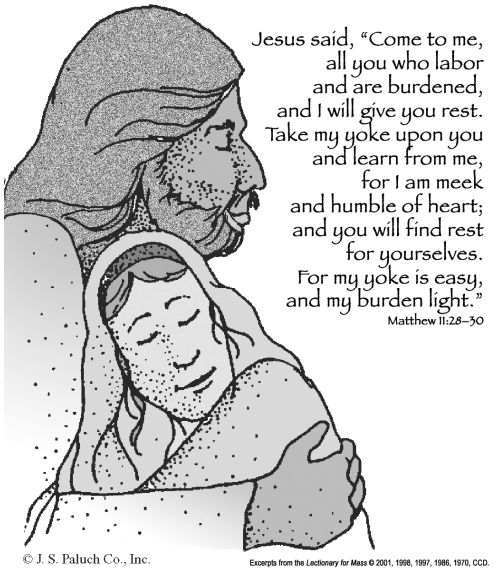

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Fifth Sunday of Lent
Wednesday:	April Fool's Day
Thursday:	St. Francis of Paola
Friday:	First Friday; Abstinence
Saturday:	St. Isidore; First Saturday

Readings for the Week

Monday:	Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 [41c-62]; Ps 23:1-6; Jn 8:1-11
Tuesday:	Nm 21:4-9; Ps 102:2-3, 16-21; Jn 8:21-30
Wednesday:	Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Dn 3:52-56; Jn 8:31-42
Thursday:	Gn 17:3-9; Ps 105:4-9: Jn 8:51-59
Friday:	Jer 20:10-13; Ps 18:2-7; Jn 10:31-42
Saturday:	Ez 37:21-28; Jer 31:10, 11-13; Jn 11:45-56
Sunday:	Mt 21:1-11 (procession); Is 50:4-7; Ps 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24; Phil 2:6-11; Mt 26:14 — 27:66 [27:11-54]

Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has issued the following regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19):

With the worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus, we are confronted once more with the fragility of our lives, and again we are reminded of our common humanity — that the peoples of this world are our brothers and sisters, that we are all one family under God.

God does not abandon us, he goes with us even now in this time of trial and testing. In this moment, it is important for us to anchor our hearts in the hope that we have in Jesus Christ. Now is the time to intensify our prayers and sacrifices for the love of God and the love of our neighbor. Let us draw closer to one another in our love for him, and rediscover the things that truly matter in our lives.

United with our Holy Father Pope Francis, let us pray in solidarity for our brothers and sisters here and around the world who are sick. Let us pray for those who have lost loved ones to this virus. May God console them and grant them peace.

We pray also for doctors, nurses, and caregivers, for public health officials and all civic leaders. May God grant them courage and prudence as they seek to respond to this emergency with compassion and in service to the common good.

In this time of need, I invite all the faithful to seek together the maternal intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and I share this prayer with you:

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe,
Queen of the Angels and Mother of the Americas.
We fly to you today as your beloved children.
We ask you to intercede for us with your Son,
as you did at the wedding in Cana.

Pray for us, loving Mother,
and gain for our nation and world,
and for all our families and loved ones,
the protection of your holy angels,
that we may be spared the worst of this illness.

For those already afflicted,
we ask you to obtain the grace of healing and deliverance.
Hear the cries of those who are vulnerable and fearful,
wipe away their tears and help them to trust.

In this time of trial and testing,
teach all of us in the Church to love one another and to be patient and kind.
Help us to bring the peace of Jesus to our land and to our hearts.

We come to you with confidence,
knowing that you truly are our compassionate mother,
health of the sick and cause of our joy.

Shelter us under the mantle of your protection,
keep us in the embrace of your arms,
help us always to know the love of your Son, Jesus. Amen.

Today's Readings

First Reading — Thus says the Lord GOD: I will open your graves, have you rise from them, and settle you on your land. Then you shall know I am the LORD, O my people! (Ezekiel 37:12-14).

Psalm — With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption (Psalm 130).

Second Reading — If Christ is in you, the spirit is alive even if the body is dead because of sin (Romans 8:8-11).

Gospel — Lazarus, dead for four days, came out of his tomb when Jesus called his name (John 11:1-45 [3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b -45]).

The English translation of the Psalm Responses from Lectionary for Mass © 1969, 1981, 1997, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation. All rights reserved.

Give Glory To God

On the Fifth Sunday of Lent, just before we begin to enter Holy Week, we are summoned to Bethany. If we had been friends of Mary, Lazarus, and Martha, and found out that Lazarus was gravely ill, we probably would have dropped everything to be with them. This was what was so surprising about the behavior of Jesus. Although he was their close friend, he chose to stay away, that God's glory would be manifested. This is a persistent theme in John's Gospel. Right to the very end, Jesus' works were meant to give glory to the Father. As our Lenten journey reaches a crescendo, let us be mindful that, as people who have "put on Christ" in baptism, we are also called, by our attitudes and actions, to give glory to God.
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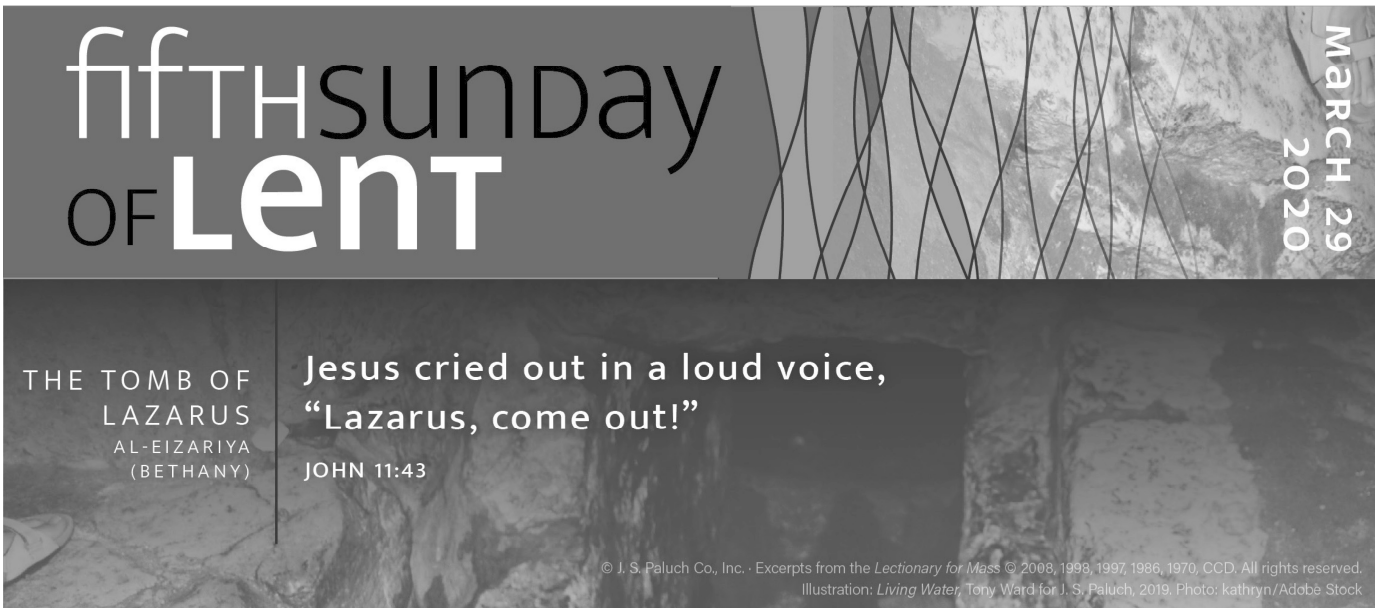

Fifth Sunday of Lent
Greater Than You Expect

Sometimes a prophet says more than he intended. Ezekiel in the first reading is talking about restoring Israel after the Babylonian exile. The Jews saw the Exile as punishment for their sins, especially the sin of relying on false gods or political leaders for their safety. God demonstrates forgiveness by bringing them back to Israel; God also shows them divine power and glory so that they return to the Lord for their protection.

Ezekiel uses the image of the dead rising from their graves (37:12). Jesus came to show us God in a new way and to fulfill the promises of all previous prophecies. Notice how the first reading repeats two phrases: "open your graves" and "know that I am the LORD." Jesus demonstrates that God's promise is much greater than anything Ezekiel expected.

First, the Gospel. When Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus, he apparently waited till his friend had died. He knew that he was going to raise Lazarus from death to help his disciples believe. So why was he "perturbed and deeply troubled"? It could be that he was disappointed that his friends did not seem to believe that he could raise Lazarus. Notice Jesus became perturbed again when some of the crowd question Jesus' ability to do so (John 11:37-38). Like Ezekiel, the people of Jesus' time did not expect him literally to raise the dead. But God used the prophet's message to prepare for Jesus' message that not only would he rise from the dead, but we will also. And like the friends and relatives of Lazarus, we too may find it hard to believe, or at least question how it could be possible. Fortunately, Jesus helps with that, too.

Look at the second reading to the Romans. Because we have God's Spirit living in us, we who are sinners can be raised to new life by that Spirit. When our sins are forgiven, we begin to live a new life by loving the people we hurt by our sins, forgiving people who have hurt us, being more concerned for the poor than for our own comfort. We are freed from worrying about the future, from holding onto grudges, and perhaps even from the fear of death itself--all because we have experienced the new life of God's Spirit and, as Ezekiel says, know that God is the LORD.

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As we approach Holy Week, our readings speak of a God who, in the midst of death, brings new life to the people. In Ezekiel, we hear that God will open the graves of the people of Israel, who faced near extinction. In the Gospel of John, Jesus gives new life to Lazarus in a manner that prefigures the resurrection of Jesus. Paul tells the Romans that in Christ, God will not only give life to our bodies after death, but God offers us abundant life here and now. We observe that the external conditions for the people described in these readings did not radically change. Israel was still in exile. Lazarus would eventually face death again. But now God's presence and power are revealed. Even when our situation in life is difficult and perhaps not likely to change soon, we remember that the Spirit dwells within us.

Ezekiel's Counter-Story

It is difficult to overstate the bleak situation faced by the people of Israel described in today's reading from Ezekiel. Babylon had invaded Jerusalem, killed many of its inhabitants, and destroyed the temple. Some of them were forced into exile in Babylon. Their captors and neighbors likely concluded that the Babylonian deity had pummeled the Hebrew deity into submission. Israel's God was as good as dead, and the people of Israel as well.
In the midst of this catastrophe, Ezekiel announces a counter-story. The narrative of God's death is false. Israel's God is alive, and God's own breath will restore their life. They will be lifted out of the grave of their grief and despair, and be returned to their land. Ezekiel's message speaks to all of us who know of profound disorientation, of separation from loved ones, and of deep loss. God will bear our unbearable sorrow, and God's spirit will offer new life and hope.

Resurrection And The Life

Today's Gospel tells us of the raising of Lazarus. In Jesus' exchange with Lazarus' sister Martha, she refers to the general resurrection of the dead on "the last day." Jesus then shifts the perspective by identifying himself as "the resurrection and the life." What does this mean? Jesus earlier had spoken of the hour "when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live" (John 5:25). When Jesus cries out in a loud voice—"Lazarus, come out!"—Jesus fulfills that role in the present, offering resurrection and life here and now, in a new relationship with him.
Resurrection is offered not only on the last day, and not only at our physical death, but in the mix of our present daily lives. Sometimes we are buried in tombs of suffering or of entrapment in sin. When we encounter death in its many forms, in faith we can hear Jesus, who summons us out of death and into life.

Today's Readings: Ez 37:12–14; Ps 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 7 –8; Rom 8:8–11; Jn 11:1–45 [3–7, 17, 20–27, 33b–45]

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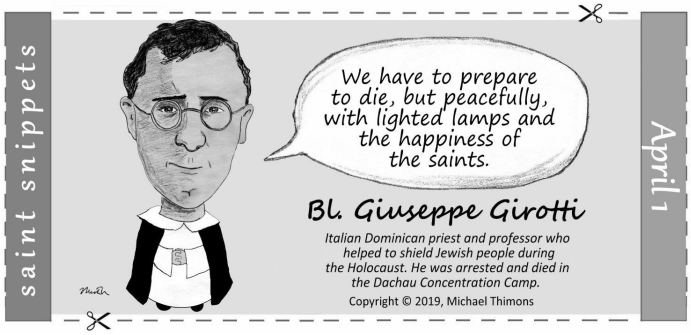


Prayer

The more you devote yourself in prayer the more you will do well in your work.

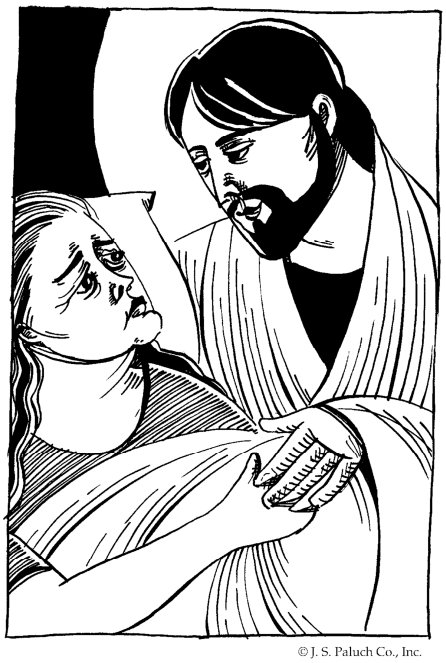
—St. John Baptist de la Salle

With God

With God, go over the sea. Without God, don't even go over the threshold.

—Russian proverb

Jesus the Healer



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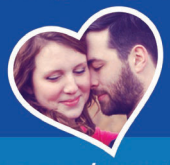

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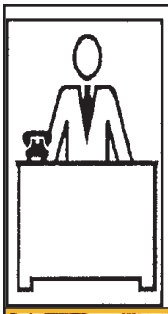

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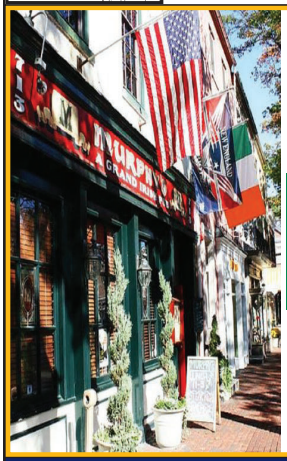

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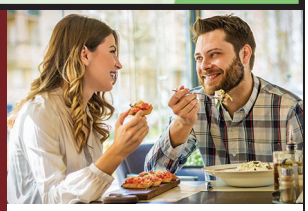

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