Those gathered begin with the Sign of the Cross, saying:

† O Lord, do not stay afar off; my strength, make haste to help me.

Psalm 139:1–3, 4–6
O Lord you have probed me and you know me; you know when I sit and when I stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. My journeys and my rest you scrutinize, with all my ways you are familiar.

Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know the whole of it. Behind me and before, you hem me in and rest your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; too lofty for me to attain.

Reading  

John 11:45 – 53
Some of [the Jews] went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, “What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. If we leave him alone, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish.” He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on they planned to kill him.

Reflection

Today’s reading follows the raising of Lazarus. Although Jesus’ intervention brought great comfort to Martha and Mary, and to those who had come to mourn with them, it caused quite a different reaction among the religious leaders. They began to plot how to kill him. Yet the death of Jesus is not up to the Jewish leaders but to God; the time and, more importantly, the reason for his passion will belong to God. We can’t help our feelings of anger at this situation, but we need to set aside such feelings and embrace the astonishing love of God that Jesus offers us through his suffering and death.

Prayers  

Your love, O God, is our hope; so we pray:

◆ Merciful God, hear our prayer.

For all those who are unjustly persecuted for their beliefs, we pray:◆ For those who have suffered abuse at the hands of political insurgents, we pray:◆ For children who have been victims of deportation and abandonment, we pray:◆ For all who strive to see the hand of God in their own suffering, we pray:

Our Father . . .

Loving and merciful God, we cry out to you in our distress and seek again the assurance of your loving protection. Grant to us, in these days of our Lenten journey, a deeper faith in your presence and a sincere gratitude for the sacrificial love of your Son, Jesus Christ, our redeemer, who lives and reigns, for ever and ever. Amen.

† O Lord, do not stay afar off; my strength, make haste to help me.