

'JESUS REACHING OUT TO MARTHA, MARY, LAZARUS & US' – HOMILY – 2 APRIL 2017

**We learn more about our own faith in Jesus through our friends, family and parish community.**

In today's Chapter 11 of John's Gospel, we see Mary and Martha grieving for Lazarus who had died.

All three are friends of Jesus.

Also in the scene are the disciples of Jesus, and the people who have come to support Mary and Martha.

**We remember the people in our lives. We pause and name them.**

(Pause)

**And now we pray for them.**

(Pause)

Jesus has deliberately exposed himself to danger, as their village of Bethany is close to Jerusalem where some wish to kill him.

Jesus has considered the risk, his mission and the family.

**When we are in great need, we can expect others to fit in with us.**

We can forget the commitments of others, and expect them to wait on us.

Such is our pain, we might not be aware of what is happening in the lives of our friends.

Jesus times his visit to fit in with his mission.

No matter how close Jesus was to the family of Lazarus, Mary and Martha,

**Jesus puts God the Father first.**

And through this,

**He is able to restore life to Lazarus and deepen the faith of all three friends, and others.**

The Gospel continues:

*<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.*

*<sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away,*

*<sup>19</sup> and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.*

*<sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home."*

We are all different in personality.

Martha comes out to see Jesus. Mary stays at home.

**Sometimes we are like Martha seeking out Jesus, and sometimes we leave it to others.**

Martha has a strong conviction that Lazarus would not have died if Jesus had been there.

Now Jesus will help her to deepen her faith.

The Gospel continues:

*<sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*

*<sup>22</sup> But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."*

*<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."*

*<sup>24</sup> Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."*

<sup>25</sup> *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,"* <sup>26</sup> *and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

<sup>27</sup> *She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah the Son of God, the one coming into the world." "*

Martha is called to share the Good News.

Martha is a disciple.

She will go to Mary and share the invitation to come and see.

Martha is a witness to Jesus.

**Jesus calls each of us to share the Good News.**

Mary doesn't waste time. She goes quickly to Jesus.

Others will be inquisitive.

The Gospel continues:

<sup>28</sup> *When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."*

<sup>29</sup> *And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.*

<sup>30</sup> *Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.* <sup>31</sup> *The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.* <sup>32</sup> *When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." "*

Mary has professed her faith. She follows the lead of Jesus.

We can wonder about God.

**DOES GOD CARE?**

**IS GOD MOVED BY OUR FEELINGS, OUR HEARTFELT CRIES?**

Let us see for ourselves as the Gospel continues.

<sup>33</sup> *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.*

<sup>34</sup> *He said, "Where have you laid him?"*

*They said to him, "Lord, come and see."*

<sup>35</sup> *Jesus began to weep.*

<sup>36</sup> *So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"*

<sup>37</sup> *But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"*

<sup>38</sup> *Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb.*

*It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.*

<sup>39</sup> *Jesus said, "Take away the stone."*

*Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him,*

*"Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days."*

<sup>40</sup> *Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"*

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone.

And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me.

<sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

Jesus was deeply moved.

He wept.

**Jesus is moved by our pleas,**

Even when we don't see the bigger picture.

Jesus is moved by our pleas,

Even when we don't understand that our solutions might not be fair to others.

**Jesus hears us.** But like the Gospel passage, **God's reply can surprise us.**

We trust in God to answer our prayers,

And for God to see the bigger picture that we can't see at this moment.

Back to the Gospel. What will happen?

The suspense is enormous.

The Gospel continues:

<sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. **Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."**

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.""

Martha and Mary are disciples of Jesus.

Martha shared with Mary. They both believe.

Many who accompanied Mary come to believe.

We think of Jesus the Good Shepherd as he calls out and heals Lazarus.

Lazarus awakens from four days of death.

Lazarus, the disciple, has the courage to come out of the tomb and face life again.

We pray that we have the courage to follow the voice of Jesus, and to begin anew.

**We too are disciples, called to bring our lives to God in prayer.**

**Called to believe.**

**WHAT IS THE STONE THAT NEEDS TO BE REMOVED IN OUR LIVES?**

**WHAT ARE THE BLOCKAGES?**

Or from last week's Gospel of the man born blind:

**WHAT ARE OUR BLIND SPOTS, OUR IMPAIRED VISION, OUR NEED OF HEALING?**

Or from the Gospel 2 weeks ago of the Samaritan woman at the well:

**DO WE INVITE THE LIVING WATER OF JESUS INTO THE ARID SPOTS AND HURTS AND GRUDGES OF OUR LIVES?**

(Pause)

**HOW DO WE PRAY LIKE JESUS TO UNBIND US AND SET US FREE?**

(Pause)

## **HOW DO WE LIVE OUR LIVES IN THE FREEDOM OF JESUS?**

## **HOW DO WE LIVES OUR LIVES UNBINDING OTHERS AND SETTING THEM FREE?**

In the last 3 weeks we have been given a wonderful opportunity to renew our lives,

By **reflecting on the inclusive and liberating encounters of Jesus in John's Gospel with:**

- The Samaritan woman at the well
- The Man born blind
- Martha
- Mary
- Lazarus
- The disciples
- Others

**May we be truly inclusive and liberating to all we encounter.**

**Thank you Jesus.**

**This weekend** we include in **our prayer** all who have suffered from **Cyclone Debbie**

And the **resulting rain depressions** in Queensland and New South Wales.

We pray for the people who died.

We pray for their families.

We pray for those who lost their homes, their businesses, their cars, their possessions, their community facilities.

We pray for the communities who have been isolated.

We pray for those who have sustained damage from floods and fallen trees and very strong winds.

We pray for those who have survived this nightmare.

We pray for those still flooded.

We thank God for the bravery of those who have rescued others.

We thank God for those restoring power, communication, providing shelter, water and food.

We thank God for those opening up roads again, those providing covers for damaged roofs.

We thank God for those running community shelters and for those keeping us informed.

We thank God for those who provided the sand bags and emergency aids.

We remember the community spirit of being there for our neighbour.

For working together in the clean-up.

We remember those now having to process insurance claims and waiting for replies.

We pray for those who now rebuild their lives after such devastation.

We thank God for the neighbours and the emergency service workers who have made a difference.

And we are grateful for the long hours and sacrifices they have made.

We pray for the community groups and agencies who will support people in the weeks and months ahead.

We pray for the gift of advocacy so that people and their needs are not forgotten.

We pray to you, O God, for so much.

We pray in solidarity as a human family of sisters and brothers.

Sustain us in hope.

Amen.

Fr Gerry Hefferan

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Jesus Reaching Out to Martha, Mary, Lazarus & Us – 2 April 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/040217.cfm>]

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