

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 11:25a, 26

I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will never die.

Gospel

John 11:1-45; L34A

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair;

it was her brother Lazarus who was ill.

So the sisters sent word to Jesus saying,

“Master, the one you love is ill.”

When Jesus heard this he said,

“This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to his disciples, “Let us go back to Judea.”

The disciples said to him,

“Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?”

Jesus answered,

“Are there not twelve hours in a day?

If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

Continued in Appendix A, p. 274, or John 11:3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45 in Appendix A, p. 275.

Reflecting on the Gospel

Both Martha and Mary say to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, / my brother would not have died.” How disappointed they must have been with Jesus! Only good friends can chide one another in such a way! They had high expectations of their

Friend: he could heal others, he certainly would heal Lazarus whom he loved so much that when he went to the tomb where Lazarus had

been laid, Jesus wept. However, Martha and Mary’s expectation, hope, desire that their brother would be healed by their Friend was actually too shortsighted. Jesus intended something way beyond their experience, their imagination, their limited understanding of him and his power. Jesus intended a new revelation about himself. And a new revelation about themselves.

Jesus purposely had delayed for two days coming to Bethany. Arriving after Lazarus was dead four days (yes, Lazarus was really dead: “there will be a stench”), Jesus could then reveal that death is necessary, but not the end. Death is necessary not so much because of the sin of Adam and Eve that

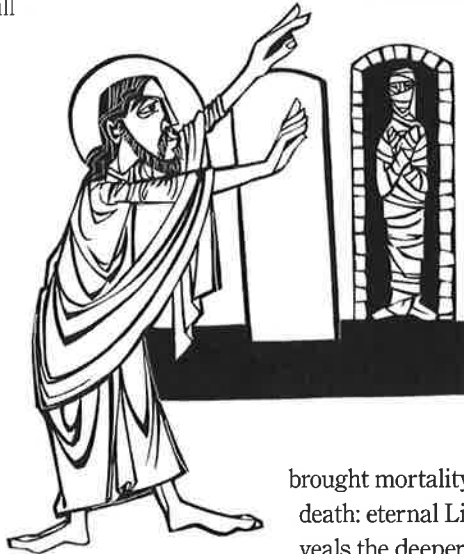
brought mortality to the human race, but because of what is beyond death: eternal Life. Out of death Jesus gives Life. Out of death Jesus reveals the deeper mystery of his own Person: “I am the resurrection and the life.” Jesus’ power over death to give Life is a whole new revelation

that asks of us nothing less than the kind of believing in Jesus that means giving our whole lives over to him. Martha and Mary came “to believe.” Have we?

The raising of Lazarus has more to do with Jesus, us, and believing than it has to do with Lazarus. Jesus works an even greater miracle than healing Lazarus. By raising him from the dead he gave a clear sign that he has power over death and life. The raising of Lazarus is a new kind of statement about life. “Do you believe this?” Jesus asks Martha. He asks the same question of us. We spend our whole lives grappling with the mystery of Jesus’ bringing Life out of death. Jesus comes to us like he came to Martha and Mary with an invitation to believe that Jesus’ own death and resurrection have meaning for us in the messiness of our daily living. This gospel challenges us not so much with respect to our belief in Jesus’ resurrection, as in believing that our own daily dying to self is already a sign of Life we are given and a sign of the fullness of Life we will receive at our resurrection. Once more: Martha and Mary came “to believe.” Have we?

Living the Paschal Mystery

Mary and Martha’s long relationship with Jesus had brought them to believe in him. It must be comforting for us to know that their belief was still less than perfect. So is ours. And, like Mary and Martha, our belief is strengthened by encounters with Jesus. One obvious way we encounter Jesus is at Mass when we expressly take time out of our busy schedules to be present. Other prayer times during the day and week are also times when we consciously strive to encounter Jesus. Perhaps less evident as encounters with Jesus would be all those times when we meet him through faith-strengthening and hope-giving encounters with other people. When our discouragement is lessened by a kind remark or when our sinfulness is forgiven by a smile and welcome, we encounter Jesus in the other and are brought to new Life. Jesus loves each of us as deeply as he loved Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and gives each of us new Life, too.



Fifth Sunday of Lent, April 2, 2017

Gospel (cont.)

John 11:1-45; L34A

But if one walks at night, he stumbles,
because the light is not in him."
He said this, and then told them,
"Our friend Lazarus is asleep,
but I am going to awaken him."
So the disciples said to him,
"Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved."
But Jesus was talking about his death,
while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep.
So then Jesus said to them clearly,
"Lazarus has died.
And I am glad for you that I was not there,
that you may believe.
Let us go to him."
So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples,
"Let us also go to die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus
had already been in the tomb for four days.
Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away.
And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary
to comfort them about their brother.
When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,
she went to meet him;
but Mary sat at home.
Martha said to Jesus,
"Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died.
But even now I know that whatever you ask of God,
God will give you."
Jesus said to her,
"Your brother will rise."
Martha said to him,
"I know he will rise,
in the resurrection on the last day."
Jesus told her,
"I am the resurrection and the life;
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.
Do you believe this?"
She said to him, "Yes, Lord.
I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,
the one who is coming into the world."

When she had said this,
she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying,
"The teacher is here and is asking for you."
As soon as she heard this,
she rose quickly and went to him.

For Jesus had not yet come into the village,
but was still where Martha had met him.
So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her
saw Mary get up quickly and go out,
they followed her,
presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.
When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him,
she fell at his feet and said to him,
"Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died."
When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her
weeping,
he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said,
"Where have you laid him?"
They said to him, "Sir, come and see."
And Jesus wept.
So the Jews said, "See how he loved him."
But some of them said,
"Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man
have done something so that this man would not have died?"

So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb.
It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.
Jesus said, "Take away the stone."
Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him,
"Lord, by now there will be a stench;
he has been dead for four days."
Jesus said to her,
"Did I not tell you that if you believe
you will see the glory of God?"
So they took away the stone.
And Jesus raised his eyes and said,
"Father, I thank you for hearing me.
I know that you always hear me;
but because of the crowd here I have said this,
that they may believe that you sent me."
And when he had said this,
he cried out in a loud voice,
"Lazarus, come out!"
The dead man came out,
tied hand and foot with burial bands,
and his face was wrapped in a cloth.
So Jesus said to them,
"Untie him and let him go."

Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary
and seen what he had done began to believe in him.