

**July 29, 2020**

Liturgy of The Word

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Today is the feast of St. Martha who, as we just heard, is the prominent sister in today's Gospel.

The focus of Chapter 11 in John's Gospel is resurrection. There are three main sections:

- 1) The illness of Lazarus and Martha and Mary's appeal to Jesus for help;
- 2) The restoring of life to Lazarus; and
- 3) The plotting of the leaders to kill Jesus because of this deed.

This is the last of the "signs" Jesus performed prior to his own passion, death and resurrection. In today's section, Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha has been ill and died. The sisters had appealed to Jesus for help because of his love for Lazarus and for them. So, they were probably confused and maybe hurt by the fact that Jesus hadn't come right away. Jesus delayed in coming to his friends, whom he loved, not out of lack of care but, as he tells his disciples, so that God, might be glorified. That is his primary intent. God's glorification.

After four days, Jesus arrives and Martha, grieving her brother's death, as any of us would grieve the death of a loved one, greets him with a bit of a complaint that doesn't sound very welcoming – sounds more like anger or hurt and blaming. "Lord, if you had been here ... had come earlier ... my brother would not have died." But she also affirms her belief that she knows, even now, that Jesus is still able to do something. That "whatever you ask of God, God will give you." She wants Jesus to give her back her brother.

In trying to comfort or reassure Martha, Jesus reminds her that her brother will rise again. Martha replies that she knows that he will rise on the last day. She assumed that Jesus was referring to the resurrection at the end of time, something distant and in the future. She doesn't really understand what Jesus is implying.

Jesus leads her, as he did the woman at the well, to a greater depth of understanding and relationship with him by sharing with Martha who he is. "I AM the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me shall live, even when having died; and the one who lives and trusts in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha replies, "Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." This statement is a remarkable profession of faith by Martha. Only Peter has had such an understanding before the resurrection. But Martha is seeing Jesus in terms of his being the messiah and prophet (son of God). She still isn't seeing what the deeper meaning is in Jesus' claim that he is the Resurrection and the life.

Jesus clarifies that he isn't just talking about something down the road, out there, another life after death, but something in the present moment. "**I am** the resurrection and the life. Those who believe, transcend death even now." The life that Jesus gives is eternal life – God's very own life – **now**. It was Jesus' reason for coming into the world, "that they may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10) The life by which God lives is the same life by which we live! Eternal life is the life of God within **us now**. Death can never be the end because God's love and life surround us and are within us. Death is not the final word. Light will be victorious over darkness.

Jesus invites Martha, and us, to a new level of consciousness. He challenges our imaginations to think beyond the boundaries we've known, to let go of old understandings and to evolve into a whole new way of seeing what resurrection/eternal life means. **Jesus reveals and gives God's own enduring life and love in the present – right here, right now!**

The life of Jesus is the template for what this new and resurrected life looks like. It is about new patterns of relationships with one another and all of creation. Iliia Delio writes that "Resurrection means the victory of new life ... born out of the death of the old. Resurrection is not an event that might happen in some remote future, but is the power of you and me, to create life out of death, here and now. Resurrection happens NOW, or it does not happen at all. It happens **in us and around us**. ..." (pp. 95-96, *The Emergent Christ*)

Believing in Jesus as the Resurrection and the Life is something we live into as we make choices to live a resurrected life, in the here and now of our lives. In our experience of the coronavirus. How we care for one another and the common good by doing our part to protect others by wearing masks and practicing social distancing and all that science tells us is necessary for fostering life, not death. How we create right relationships as individuals and institutions by examining our own prejudices and bias and privilege as white folks in relationship to and with our brothers and sisters of color. It is about being antiracist. How we respond to the destruction of Earth to which we are intimately connected in the web of life. So many issues and opportunities to choose life. As Brother David Steindl-Rast has said, "This moment is an opportunity to come alive."

**Resurrected life is a gift and a choice we are called to every moment of our lives.** This is the mystery by which we live. Jesus says to each of us: Do you believe this?