Jesus Encounters
Lazarus, Martha and Mary
5th Sunday of Lent

Ezekiel 37:12-14

12 Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.  
13 And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14 I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."

Romans 8:8-11

8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

John 11:1-45

11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. 3So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” 4But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. 5Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” 6The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” 7Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. 8But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” 9After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” 10The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” 11Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. 12But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” 13Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. 14Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. 15For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

17When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, 19and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” 23Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” 25Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.” 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.” And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 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. 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.”

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 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.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. 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.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 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.”

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

Journal

▸ What prayer is emerging in me as I engage with this text?

▸ What word or phrase will I repeat this week to allow the insight of my lectio divina reading to find its home in me and begin to transform me?
Reflection – Most Rev Paul Bird CSsR, Bishop of Ballarat

What did you hear in this week’s Gospel and what does it mean to you?

There’s great drama in this Sunday’s Gospel, the story of the raising of Lazarus. Perhaps the most dramatic scene is right at the end when Jesus comes to the tomb and he calls out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” And the dead man comes out of the tomb. This is an extraordinary event, the raising of someone from the dead. And yet when we look at the whole of the story, we find that there are a lot of ordinary elements in this narrative. You may recall that the story begins when Lazarus is unwell, and his sisters, Martha and Mary, are very concerned about him. That’s something I’m sure we can identify with in our own life. When someone we know is not well – it might be a member of our family or a good friend – we know the concern that we have. Jesus shared this concern with those who were his very good friends.

As the story unfolds, we find that Jesus arrives too late to greet Lazarus before he has died. And it seems to me this is an extra sadness for Martha and Mary. They have the grief of the loss of their brother but they also have the grief that a good friend whom they know is very close to Lazarus hasn’t been there in those final days. We too can identify with that, and share their kind of grief. We might think of the death of someone in our family or a good friend and we know the tears that can come with that and maybe that’s sometimes compounded by the fact that someone wasn’t able to be there to say farewell.

Then as the story continues, when Jesus does arrive, he’s moved deeply with sympathy with Martha and Mary, and the text tells us that he saw Mary crying and this set him crying as well. He saw Mary weeping, and Jesus himself began to weep. This again, is something I’m sure that we could identify with. We may have been at a funeral of a good friend and we’ve seen those who are very close to that person in tears and their tears maybe bring tears to our eyes.

So in all of these ways, the story is a very ordinary story. There’s the love of friends, there’s the concern when someone is unwell, and there are the tears when we lose a friend. And yet, in the midst of all of that, we have the extraordinary conclusion that there in the middle of all those ordinary things of life, and joys and sadness, Jesus brings the extraordinary power of God. He stands there and says, “Lazarus, come out!” and the man who has been buried comes forward from the dead. This is something extraordinary in that very ordinary scene that we can identify with.

And the thought that comes to me from that is that Jesus does promise to be with us in our joys and sorrows, but more than that, he brings the power and the mercy of God right there in the middle of our daily life.

I hope these thoughts may have prompted some thoughts in your own mind as you reflect on the Gospel for this Sunday.

What will you take away that will sustain you personally in your faith journey?

So as we now think of a message or two that we might take away from the Gospel for this Sunday, one that comes to my mind is how Jesus shares the joys and sorrows of our life and if I make that
personal for myself, it’s how Jesus shares the happiness and sometimes the tears that come in my life. We read very clearly in this Gospel the sympathy, the empathy of Jesus for our happiness and for our tears.

And another message that I do take away from this is an extraordinary example of sympathy for other people. And of course, that’s a call for, I believe, all of us. As Jesus was sharing in that joy and sorrow of Lazarus and of Martha and Mary, I’ll be doing what I can to share in the joys and sorrows of the people that I meet day by day. I hope you can draw some lesson or a message yourself from this reading.

This reflection was recorded and can be viewed at www.dbb.org.au.

Mary MacKillop

There where you are you will find God.

Pope Francis

We face so many challenges in life: poverty, distress, humiliation, the struggle for justice, persecutions, the difficulty of daily conversion, the effort to remain faithful to our call to holiness, and many others. But if we open the door to Jesus and allow him to be part of our lives, if we share our joys and sorrows with him, then we will experience the peace and joy that only God, who is infinite love, can give.

Reflection Questions

1. In my times of sorrow and my times of joy, do I have a sense of Christ present and sharing in these situations? In which of these do I find it easier to know of the closeness of Christ?

2. Do I find it easier to empathise and share in the sorrow or the joy of others? What might prevent me from sharing myself fully in these situations?

3. In this passage, we see Jesus’ humanness through his tenderness and affection. How does this passage enrich your understanding of who Jesus is?

4. Can I name an example of the extraordinary power of God in the midst of the everyday, ordinary things of my life?

5. For personal reflection: Is there a situation in which you feel bound and long to hear the words, “<<Your Name>>, Come Out!”? Bring this to Christ in prayer, that the extraordinary power of God might enter into this situation to bring new life.