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### Hoping

**What do I want to say to the Lord in light of what you have shared or because of what others have shared?**

The Gospel always leads us to places of hope, possibility and new beginnings. It awakens us to where and what we should be grateful for. It leads us to where God is waiting and inviting us to grow in freedom, in inner peace and maturity as a disciple. What prayer is in your heart as you draw to a close in this period of prayer?

- For the ability to share with Jesus what is unfolding in my life.
- For a sense that I am loved by Jesus.
- For patience when I have to wait for God intervention.
- For an awareness as to how grief or loss is affecting me.
- For the honesty to express what is actually happening for me.
- For faith in the resurrection.
- For the ability to formulate and express what I believe in.
- For the freedom to express regret or disappointment with God.
- For faith in a God who feels emotion.
- For the capacity to express my emotions.
- For the faith to believe in what God is already doing in my life.
- For the parts of my life where I need to be unbound.
- For freedom.
- For direction away from the life sapping aspects of life.

## PRAYING WITH THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT – YEAR A

GOSPEL JOHN 11:1-45

“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE”

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, ‘Lord, the man you love is ill.’ On receiving the message, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will end not in death but in God’s glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.’

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judaea.’ The disciples said, ‘Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?’ Jesus replied:

‘Are there not twelve hours in the day?  
A man can walk in the daytime without stumbling  
because he has the light of this world to see by;  
but if he walks at night he stumbles,  
because there is no light to guide him.’

He said that and then added, ‘Our friend Lazarus is resting, I am going to wake him.’ The disciples said to him, ‘Lord, if he is able to rest he is sure to get better.’ The phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by ‘rest’ he meant ‘sleep’, so Jesus put it plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let us go to him.’ Then Thomas – known as the Twin – said to the other disciples, ‘Let us go too, and die with him.’

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said:

'I am the resurrection and the life.

If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this?'

'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'

When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, 'The Master is here and wants to see you.' Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close

Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening."

- How does this image of Jesus displaying emotion affect your image of God?
- Is there someone or something that you have written off as dead which you would benefit from sharing or disclosing with Jesus?
- How does comparing and contrasting help or hinder you in life?

Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone.

- Are there things in your life or in your faith you accept in theory but in practice you find them more difficult to unpack?
- In your own life are you being called by God to do something that on the face of it, just does not make sense?

"Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me.'"

- What prevents you from having such faith?
- What has Jesus done in your life that help or enabled your faith?

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.' Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

- Might Jesus be calling you from some lifeless aspect of your life?
- What do you need to be unbound from so that you can "go free"?
- What do you need to see if you can believe and have faith in Jesus?
- It was all possible because of the love Jesus had for Lazarus rest in the love God has for you and see what is possible.

Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?'"

- Rest with this idea – resurrection being found in the person of Jesus. It's not just something that God does – it's who he is!!
- Do you believe this that faith is the key to eternal life?

"Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.'

- In prayer formulate your own profession of faith as to who you believe Jesus is.

"When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, 'The Master is here and wants to see you.' Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there."

- Who are the people who help you see where Jesus is in your life?
- Might you need to change or shift focus if you are to have an encounter with Jesus?
- Do you project onto others, or have others projected onto you a narrative without knowing the full story?

"Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'"

- Where in your life do you find yourself apportioning blame to Jesus?

"At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing,

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### Reading

*Slowly read the Gospel passage; listening carefully to the story. Read it intentionally, so as to perceive the small details we can miss on an initial reading. These small details might be the bridge between the Gospel Story and the story of your life.*

- What phrase or word resonated with you in your reading of this text?

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### Happening

Through the lens of the Gospel we now look with compassion at the story of our lives

*Having listened to the text of the Gospel now let it speak to the text of your life story. Become aware of where this Gospel story is already alive in your life or in your community. Or maybe you notice where it is absent in your life? Where might this Gospel story be inviting life and hope into aspects of your life that long for resurrection and new life?*

**“There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. It was the same Mary, the sister of the sick man Lazarus, who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair.”**

- Are you aware of people in your community who are ill or who would benefit from a visit?
- Are there aspects of your life where if you were to make connections with past events or the broader picture it might be helpful?

**“The sisters sent this message to Jesus, ‘Lord, the man you love is ill.’ On receiving the message, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will end not in death but in God’s glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.”**

- Is there a message you need to share with the Lord during this time of prayer?
- Have you a sense of being loved by Jesus?
- What reply might Jesus be making to your requests in prayer?
- In your prayer are you seeking something for yourself and others, or do you seek what might give glory to God?

**“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judaea.’ The disciples said, ‘Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?’”**

- When you experience a delay in your prayers being answered do you question God’s love for you, or can you still experience God love in your waiting?
- Where in your life is fear taking from your freedom?

**“Jesus replied: ‘Are there not twelve hours in the day? A man can walk in the daytime without stumbling because he has the light of this world to see by; but if he walks at night he stumbles, because there is no light to guide him.”**

- What or who, is your guiding light in life?

**“He said that and then added, ‘Our friend Lazarus is resting, I am going to wake him.’ The disciples said to him, ‘Lord, if he is able to rest he is sure to get better.’ The phrase Jesus used referred to the death of Lazarus, but they thought that by ‘rest’ he meant ‘sleep’, so Jesus put it plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead; and for your sake I am glad I was not there because now you will believe. But let us go to him.’ Then Thomas – known as the Twin – said to the other disciples, ‘Let us go too, and die with him.’”**

- Have you experienced being misinterpreted or people not understanding what you were actually saying?
- What does Jesus need to do for you to truly believe?

**“On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother.**

- How have you felt when the people you expected to be there for you just didn’t show up?
- Is there something or somebody you need to acknowledge as being no more? What might you need to let go of?

**“When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house.”**

- In moments of grief or loss do you react like Martha whereby you can’t sit still? Or do you react like Mary and just go into yourself?

**“Martha said to Jesus, ‘If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.’ ‘Your brother’ said Jesus to her ‘will rise again.’ Martha said, ‘I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.’**

- Have you had reason to say to Jesus “if you had been here ....”
- Despite living with the reality of unanswered prayers do you believe that whatever Jesus asks, God the Father will grant?
- Might you need to explore in prayer what resurrection means for you?