

JRS Lent Reflection

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE
UNITED KINGDOM

A WEEKLY PRAYER RESOURCE

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT • SUNDAY 29TH MARCH 2020 •

THIS WEEK'S GOSPEL

JOHN 11:3-7, 17, 20 -27, 33-45

Mary and Martha 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.' 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

“I am the resurrection
and the life.”

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.' 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 the opening. 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. 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.' 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.

AKBAR'S* STORY

Akbar, one of our refugee friends, has spent years separated from his family. The UK Asylum system left him destitute and homeless but he found hope at JRS.*

One of the biggest sources of suffering in Akbar's situation is the separation from his family who remain in his home country:

"[I still have family in my home country]. Yes, I have my mother - she's old. And one sister, but my father died two years ago when I was here. He was a very loving

person. When he was ill before dying, he was asking me 'when you are coming? When you are coming? Come!' so unfortunately, it is not possible for me to go back - even my country is not accepting me, they are not giving any travel documents. So unfortunately he died [before I could see him again]."

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This feeling of separation from home was made worse by the fact that he was now street homeless as a result of his case being refused:

"I was homeless. I.. most of the time was in the night... I was going to sleep in Victoria Station because it was a little bit safer for me and also eating near Victoria is a place for Cardinal place for people, homeless people to eat. There was a breakfast in Waterloo Station, near Waterloo Station there is a community centre you can go and eat breakfast. [The] Problem was that breakfast, it was not for asylum seekers, it was for all homeless people. So it's not easy environment. I sometimes stayed in a night shelter but didn't

really sleep most of the time because you have a fear somebody's next to you, some people are alcoholic, violent and they just attack you with no reason."

During his time spent destitute and desperate, one of the greatest sources of hope for Akbar was the JRS 'At Home' hosting scheme. This scheme offers many who are street homeless a vital lifeline, and Akbar has not forgotten its effects on his own life:

"Basically, it saved my life. It saved my life. Because with the homelessness, my blood pressure was increasing with so much pressure and so much... sometime I was thinking to commit suicide really, because there was no hope."



Thanks to the JRS hosting scheme, Akbar was able to recover his strength both mentally and physically:

"I feel very strong that I can fight [for my case]. But I think it is the greatest help in my whole life [that] I find JRS hosting scheme. This scheme is remarkable and the people where I go are loving, they are so much care about you, they provide you everything. Nice breakfast, lunch, dinner, accommodation, laundry. It's give me so much courage."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Akbar shares with us the pain he felt being separated from his family at a particularly painful time. There are many families separated from their loved ones around the world as a result of this coronavirus lockdown. Perhaps you too know that pain of separation. Take a moment to offer this experience to the Lord, bringing before him anyone you know who is particularly struggling now.



Jesus meets Lazarus' family in their grief and shares it. He knows that, even in this situation of loss, compassion can make a difference, and the glory of God can be revealed. At this time, many will be feeling these painful emotions. How do I respond to others' grief and suffering? What is it like to share another's grief and powerlessness? Do I trust that God is at work, even in what seems a hopeless situation?



Our stories today deal in different ways with the theme of life after death. One way to get in touch with that hope of new life is to reflect on an experience of when you or someone you love seems to have 'come back to life' after a period of real difficulty and suffering. As you look at that experience, what surprises you?

**To protect his identity, this is not his real name.*