

## Memorial of Saints Martha

29<sup>th</sup> July 2021

*John 11:19-27*

### REFLECTION

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint Martha. It is quite fitting to regard this as a memorial, not only of Martha but of Mary and Lazarus as well. Martha appears in two of the four gospels, Luke and John, but, in each case in the company of her sister Mary. The gospel reading from John for today's feast is often chosen for a funeral Masses. In this Gospel Martha is portrayed as a woman in grief, because of the death of her brother Lazarus. Martha, her sister Mary and her brother Lazarus are referred to as loved by Jesus, as friends of Jesus. This is a family of disciples who have experienced the love of God present in Jesus and have responded to that love. Martha's grief at the death of her brother Lazarus is to be looked at as the grief of a disciple, of a believer. We can sympathize with Martha's gentle rebuke of Jesus, ***'If you had been here, my brother would not have died'***. Firstly, there was a recognition of Jesus' healing power in this statement but at the same time an implicit expression of disappointment that he did not come sooner. We can all feel a little let down by the Lord when a loved one dies. The timing of death rarely seems right to us. Jesus' response to Mary's disappointment and grief has spoken to believers ever since as they struggle to let go of a loved one from this life, ***'I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though they die they will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die'***. Jesus is declaring that our present communion with him, which his love for us and our faith in him creates, will not be broken by death. In virtue of that communion, we already live with his risen life, over which death has no power. The question Jesus then addresses to Martha is addressed to us all, ***'Do you believe this?'*** On this her feast day we are invited to make her response to Jesus' question our own, ***'Yes, Lord, I believe...'***