

## Scripture Reflection – Sunday, March 28, 2020

(Readings: Ezekiel 37:12-14; Romans 8:8-11; John 11:1-45)

Martha and Mary, the sisters of Lazarus, both turn to Jesus as they meet him, "*Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died ...*". These words are also echoed by what the people say about Jesus "He, who opened the blind man's eyes, couldn't he also prevent him from dying?"

Never before has this Gospel passage described what we are experiencing on a personal and global level. Death has taken over our life, affecting our health, our social and economic life. Everything is turned upside down, starting with funeral rites, painfully numerous these days even in our community. Funeral celebrations are also called "obsequies" which literally means "to go behind", referring to the procession that accompanies the deceased on the journey to heaven. The funeral usually becomes an opportunity to gather with those who are in pain, and to offer strength and consolation. But in the upheaval of these days, the funeral rites are also affected: staying away increases the pain. The burial of those who die takes place immediately without the consolation of the Church or the community.

Even before performing the miracle, Jesus confirms that he is present, immersed in our history. He is closer to us now than we cannot be close to each other. The ways of human consolation seem compromised and impossible but this is precisely the hour of God: this emergency is the time in which God brings out his life force. We make the words of Martha and Mary our own and also the cry of anguish of the disciples of Jesus who fear dying in the storm. We are not ashamed to tell the Lord "*where are you?*", to protest if he seems distant or asleep. And to let the Lord really give his answer that will surely surprise us.

John, the evangelist, when he recounts the resurrection of Lazarus, is careful not to say that the dead man returns happy as before to his sisters. Jesus, listening to the sisters' prayer, making their pain his own (he is also his friend), orders that Lazarus be released. The evangelist tells us that Jesus did not primarily remove the dead from the grave, but removed the death from the hearts of the sisters, letting mourning turn to hope, giving the desire to live. "*Lord, if you had been here ...*", and He is still here, he listens to our prayers and promises us that death will not ultimately have victory in our hearts, that we are able to have new hope and to live. Have a Blessed Sunday

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