

Reflection for All Saints Day. John 11: 32-44

Mary comes to Jesus and chides Him for not being around in her hour of need. 'If only you had been here my brother would not have died!' It is the sort of cry that has been repeated through the ages. 'Why?' and 'Where were you when I needed you?' Jesus, we are told, was moved by her grief and that of those around her. Greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved, John tells us. "Where have you laid him?" Jesus asks. All around the mutterings, 'Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind have kept this man from dying?' Jesus comes to the tomb, which was a cave with the entrance sealed by a stone. In a stony area where it was hard to dig graves this was common practice. Jesus asks for the stone to be moved. Martha, ever the practical one, cautions against such a move. 'Lord already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.' Jesus responds, "Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the Glory of God?" So the stone is moved and Lazarus is called from within. Lazarus walks out still wrapped in his grave clothes. Jesus says to them "Unbind him, let him go."

There is no easy explanation for this miracle. Some say it is a precursor to Jesus' own Resurrection, but Lazarus is returned to life on earth. Jesus passes through death to life beyond. Some suggest that the whole thing was planned by Jesus to show the power of God, this is to suppose that we can guess the mind of God; something that we cannot do. There are the questions as to why God allows suffering and death. The very question that those around at the time were asking and we are no nearer answering now.

Jesus weeps with His friends and for His friends. He feels their loss. He is aware of their pain and suffering as He continues to be aware of our suffering. As parents we suffer with our children and for them; often the suffering that we feel for our loved ones can be greater than theirs. There is no reason to suppose that it is not so with God who watches us blunder from one crisis to another, from one mess to another. Just as we as parents might say we knew this would end in tears, so God feels every pain of ours but gives us the free will to make a mess of things, as we frequently do. Jesus tells the people to 'unbind Lazarus' to 'let him go!' So, we are given our freedom to live our lives, to make our mistakes, but God remains, waiting, loving, forgiving.

*Almighty God,
you know our going out and our coming in,
our highs and our lows.
Our sorrows and our joys,
Our successes and our mistakes.
Help us not rely solely on our own limited understanding,
but trust in Your infinite wisdom to guide our steps.
Amen*