



Lent reflection for Friday, March 31st

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John 11:38-44

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Today's reflection is by Daria Rigney

For me, the most poignant part of this gospel story is that it's about a family and specifically about siblings. There's a charming domesticity about the sisters with their yin/yang personalities...Martha, the fussy head of the household and the sister responsible for making sure everyone is fed and Mary, the meditative and more laid back sister who trusts that all will be well. Imagining the depth of their sadness and loss at the death of their beloved brother gives us a window into their profound love for Lazarus. They tried so hard to get Jesus to come when Lazarus was sick but this passage shows them grieving and desperate as a troubled Jesus finally, four days later, shows up at their brother's tomb. They have lost their brother despite all the patience and persistence they summoned during Lazarus' last days.

As I age, the bond between my brother and myself has evolved into one that's closer and stronger than ever. A couple of years ago, my brother got himself into a dangerous and troubling

situation. He fell on hard times and needed an enormous amount of support--emotional, practical and financial. I found myself torn apart by his troubles and saturated with his sadness and hopelessness. Through his ordeal I realized how much I loved him and cherished the memories and history we shared. Like all siblings, we know each other like no one else in the world despite so many years of living our own separate lives. His needs pushed me to understanding a level of devotion, resourcefulness and love that I hadn't known I was capable of experiencing.

And so, Martha has every reason to believe that her brother is dead and decomposing in his tomb. She warns Jesus of the odor of decomposition when he asks to remove the stone. Jesus comforts her, telling her not to worry. He reminds her that her belief in him is all she needs to see the glory of God. He reorients her to His presence so that she can reaffirm her faith in Him and his divine power. Her brother rises from his tomb and lives setting in motion Jesus' captivity and his road to Golgotha.

At this Lenten season, I pray for empathy to always be deeply moved by the pain of others, patience to wait despite things not happening according to my timeline and belief to cope with the unbearable losses we sustain.

Daria Rigney lives with her husband, Francis, and their big yellow dog, Henri. She spends her time reading, quilting, knitting, walking and taking care of her sweet grandsons.

