

# From the Chapel – March 29: 'Help my unbelief'



*["From the Chapel"](#) is a series of short, daily reflections on life and faith in a time of uncertainty. As people across the world cope with the effects of the coronavirus – including the social isolation necessary to combat its spread – these reflections remind us of the hope that lies at the heart of the Gospel.*

In the traditional Lectionary, there is no three-year A-B-C cycle, and those who attend the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite or any of the Eastern Rites hear the same readings in the same order every Lent, just as their forebears did from the fourth century on. That builds among the faithful a comforting familiarity with those readings, and I came, in our 20-plus years at an Extraordinary Form oratory, to look forward to particular selections, which always seemed to arrive at just the point in Lent when I needed them most.

One of those is the Gospel that is read, in the revised Lectionary in use for the past 50 years, on the Fifth Sunday in Lent, Year A: John 11:1-45.

I remember as a child being fascinated by the miracle in this passage, the raising of Lazarus from the dead. And, yes, I still marvel at that miracle today and see in it a foretaste and promise of Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of our bodies at the end of time.

But over the years, I have found that the part of this passage that moves me the most occurs before Christ approaches the tomb and calls Lazarus forth:

"Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise.' Martha said to him, 'I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last

day.' Jesus told her, 'I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.'"

Martha's declaration of her unshakable faith ("I know he will rise ...") calls forth from Jesus the heart, not just of John's Gospel, but of the Good News of Christianity: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die."

To which Martha, who does not know that Christ is about to raise her brother from the dead, responds once more in perfect faith: "I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."

"Do you believe this?" Do we? In the midst of troubles and trials and turmoil and darkness and despair and death, do we have the faith of Martha? In the face of great loss, can we say with her certainty that we believe that Christ is the resurrection and the life?

"O Lord, I believe," St. Augustine wrote; "Help my unbelief." At those moments when we find it hard to be like Martha, we can and should make St. Augustine's prayer our own.

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