

retreat @home

*"Lord, if you had
been here..."*

DAY 1: MONDAY

"Lord, if you had been here..."

PREPARE: Go to your chosen prayer place, settle down and become still. Take some deep breaths and slow your breathing. Relax and come to rest. God is here to meet with you.

OPEN: *I open my hands and say, "here I am God..."*
I open my ears and say, "I am listening God..."
I open my imagination and ask, "lead me God..."

ASK: Become aware of how you are feeling today, name those feelings out loud to God. Ask God for whatever you sense that you need in this time of prayer today.
Be bold to ask - God loves to give.

GOSPEL READING: John 11:17-35

Read today's Gospel passage through slowly two or three times until you have a clear sense of its flow.

MEDITATION: Bethany is only a small village, a cluster of homesteads along the dust road that leads to Jerusalem.

On this spring day Bethany is quieter than normal; no chatter, no laughter of children playing in the street. Sickness and death have visited here and neighbours eye each other nervously.

Poor Lazarus, the fever took him so quickly.
Those dear, kind sisters, how they loved their brother!

The heaviness of grief lies on the village; it shudders with the groans and weeping of the mourners.

Suddenly, the sound of running feet... a messenger...
"Jesus is coming! It's a bit late now."

Martha bursts from the house at a run. The road rises out of the village and Jesus is standing now at the brow of the hill, his frame silhouetted against the spring sunlight.

How does Martha greet him? Watch her body as she reaches him.

Watch their faces, listen to their voices, feel the emotion...

Now Martha hurries back for her sister, her words are urgent, *"The Teacher is here and is calling for you."*

Jesus has waited. He is still.

Mary sees him; she kneels at his feet in the dust.

How does she speak the words:

"Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died"?

Watch the face of Jesus as he sees her distress. Listen to the sound of his breath tightening as he begins to weep. Watch the teardrops speckling the dust and falling on Mary. How long do they stay like this? Stay a while here.

Where do you find yourself standing in this story?

CONVERSATION: Coming out of your own imagining of the story, take a few moments to talk it over with God as if you were telling a friend about what just happened. What did you notice? What were the feelings that arose in you? Did anything surprise you? Was there anything uncomfortable? Do you sense yourself wanting to make any particular response?

ENDING: End your prayer, perhaps shaping one sentence that captures what you want to say to God. Move to somewhere different - make a hot drink - take a few moments to jot down your thoughts.

REVIEW & RELISH: If you are able to find another slot in your day, return to your prayer place, read the story and take the journey in your imagination once again. New things may emerge or you may simply find yourself relishing the earlier insights more deeply.

THREE KEY QUESTIONS:

HIS STORY - What do I see in Jesus when he weeps?

OUR STORY - How does the weeping Jesus meet us in the coronavirus crisis?

MY STORY - Where is Jesus weeping with me in my life?
What is the grief-work I need to do?

CREATIVE IDEAS: Choose a phrase that struck you from the story, write it or paint it out large. Allow it to suggest colours, font style, background... add words or images that emerge for you... let your painting become your prayer.

RETREAT ON THE MOVE:

Imagination - which one of the sisters do you most relate to? Spend the rest of your day being Mary or Martha. Whatever you are doing through the day, imagine Jesus beside you in the way he was with them.

Posture - explore the difference between standing and saying, "Lord if you had been here..." and kneeling at his feet and saying the same words.

EXPLORE FURTHER:

Listen to the song 'Weep with me' by Rend Collective 2018



THE COMMUNITY OF THE
TREE OF LIFE

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Shaped by God