



When the worst happens

Ricarda Witcombe *reflects on* John 11:1-45

Today's Gospel passage is long and powerful. It brings us right into the heart of Passiontide at every level. There are many people and voices within it – one is Martha, a woman whom Jesus loved. She speaks here in the immediate moments after her beloved brother has died. She has longed for Jesus to come and make him well, but he hasn't. The worst has happened.

When Jesus does arrive, Martha opens her heart to him. She gives him both her grief and her faith. For Martha the two things do not cancel each other out, but co-exist. So often, we find our life experience too difficult to make faith seem possible. Martha shows us another way. She knows

that, standing before her, despite what has happened, is the Lord of heaven and earth. God is still God. The path continues. In one hand she holds her life, with all its pain and bereavement, and in the other she holds her faith in God.

In Martha we see a woman in the midst of grief, standing in a place of faith. Her statement in verse 27 is extraordinary. Church history being what it is, we have placed much more emphasis on Peter's declaration of faith in the Gospel. But Martha's is just as great, if not greater, especially given the experience that she speaks out of – I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who has come into the world. 🙏

Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

We've never had turkeys before so when a local smallholder was selling turkey eggs at the gate of their small farm we bought some. Two of our hens had just gone broody so we divided the eggs between them.

Four weeks of waiting but then, in the nest box, was a chick but upside down, quite cold and still. I picked it up to take it away to bury it but the warmth of my hand as I walked back to the house changed the story from sadness to hope as first there was faint movement in the toes and then, under the heat lamp, a return to faint life.

The tiny bird wanted to live and I wanted it to live. It was enough. When the Spirit of God brooded over the waters in Genesis and there was life it was more than enough – "and indeed, it was very good". 🙏

Holy God, when life pitches us into the darkness and words fail us, give us the grace to go on trusting you, that we may know that you stay with us and sustain us through the darkness and the light, for ever. Amen.

A Lenten Camino

Part 6 – from conflict to hope

by Sr Janet Fearn

The fortress on the tiny island of Santa Cruz represents a fight, not with swords, bows and arrows, but one which, through learning, research and education, combats climate change and defends an exquisite maritime habitat.

Santa Cruz also celebrates the wild cinderella shearwater which, every afternoon for fifteen years, befriended the residents of, and visitors to, the island. The bird joined them, shared their food, listened to their stories and then flew away, to return

the following day. Such was the shearwater's approachability and ability to bring people together, regardless of their origins, that she was created the island's Honorary Ambassador of Foreign Affairs.

Are there ways in which I can unite people in friendship and peace? Could I share their stories? Might I become one with our beautiful and fragile natural world? How can I nurture hope?

Sr Janet's book, *A Lenten Camino*, is available from Redemptorist Publications as an e-book: www.rpbooks.co.uk/-a-lenten-camino 🙏

“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Luke 9:23