

## Do You Believe?

**Intro.** In the neighborhood where I grew up were an amazing number of Catholic families, many on Nightingale Road. One time in the mid-sixties my mother's best friend, Betty, was upset because her two daughters who went to Catholic University had invited a priest friend to visit them at their home. Betty was upset (my mom shared her surprise) because in those days priests stayed in rectories and sisters stayed in convents. And worse, they called the priest by his first name! I got a chuckle out of their reaction. A few days before my ordination, I decided to have a little fun with my mother. I told her after my ordination, she would have to call me, "**Fr. Mike.**" She just looked at me and said no, she did not. I reminded her of the story of years before; she just did what mothers do and waved me off.

**I.** Martha, Mary and Lazarus had a very good friendship with the Lord. A friendship different from his disciples. It was informal. The Lord was able to relax, away from the pressure. They shared at least one dinner together and probably more. They probably used his name, with respect of course. The friendship allowed Martha and Mary to ask where he had been while their brother died. They were upset at his late arrival after his death. The Lord didn't take it personally. He understood their pain because he shared it. This moment was a turning point in the Lord's ministry. He was coming ever closer to Jerusalem. John tells us less than two miles. Jerusalem was where his three year mission would culminate with his resurrection from the dead. He taught powerfully; healed blind men, lepers and mental illness; and now the raising of a dead man

was a foreshadowing of his own rising. This miracle sealed his fate with the Pharisees and scribes. They set a plan to trap him along with Lazarus because he was a strong witness to the Lord's power.

**Concl.** The key moment was when the Lord asked if Martha and Mary believed he was the resurrection and the life. Their response was a “yes” that was still a little shaky as shown by Martha's last minute concern about the smell when the tomb was opened. That is the key question for each of us also. Despite all the difficult things in our lives and our world, do you and I believe the Lord is the resurrection and the life? Do we believe he offers eternal life? Some days it is easy to say yes. Other days, like now, it can be more difficult to believe. But we know *good people*. We have seen *good things* with our own

eyes. People are coming up with creative ways to connect with each other. Musicians, singers, actors and people in our neighborhoods are playing and singing “together” on the internet and in driveways. In these moments, my belief in the Lord as the resurrection and the life is strengthened. I see the power of the Holy Spirit of God alive. Now is the time to show the presence of God in how we respond to this crisis. In the *darkness*, we must be **light**. We must be **hope** for each other as we roll back the stone for ourselves and others. Continue to follow the guidelines to stay safe and pray for each other. Palms will be available next week; watch for times.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

March 29, 2020