

July 29, 2026 - Memory of ss. Martha, Mary and Lazarus

Sir 24, 1-2.5-7.12-16 26-30; or 1Jo 4, 7-16

Jo 11, 19-27 or Jo12,1-11

Homily

This liturgical memory of Martha, Mary and Lazarus could be seen as the feast of friendship. Indeed, we see in the Gospels that Jesus has a very wide range of relationships with the various people he meets. First, there are the crowds, to whom he addresses his message and for whom he is often moved by compassion. Among these crowds there were, of course, those whom he disturbed and who fought him, in particular the Doctors of the Law, the Scribes and the Pharisees; but there were also a large number of disciples, men and women who followed him on his apostolic tours. At one point, he chose seventy-two of them to send on mission. And then there was the group of twelve apostles whom he had called individually and in a special way, and who shared his entire public life. Among them were some more intimate ones whom he brought with him at special moments, such as at the Transfiguration and in Gethsemane.

Alongside all this, and in addition to all this, Jesus had a very deep friendship with Martha, Mary and Lazarus, with whom he liked to stop during his apostolic walks. The details of the story of Lazarus' resurrection reveal the intensity of this relationship.

Less is known of Lazarus than of Martha and Mary; and of the latter two, it seems that it was Martha who was most familiar with Jesus. She was the one who welcomed him into her home, and the direct way she spoke to him revealed the depth of their friendship. But there's more. In the story we have just read, taken from John's Gospel, there's a lot more to it than first meets the eye. Indeed, the first declaration of faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God - which the Synoptic Gospels put in the mouth of Peter, John puts in the mouth of Martha: *"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world."*

So this feast of friendship is also a feast of faith!