

# **Parish of Mottingham St Andrew with St Alban**

**29<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2020, 5<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT**

## **Collect**

Most merciful God,  
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ  
delivered and saved the world:  
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross  
we may triumph in the power of his victory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

## **Gospel Reading: John 11: 17-45**

17When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, 19and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' 23Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' 24Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' 25Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 27She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

28When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' 29And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. 30Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' 33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' 35Jesus began to weep. 36So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' 37But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

38Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.' 40Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' 41So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' 43When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' 44The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

45Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

## **Reflection on the Gospel.**

Jesus reveals in this passage in his great 'I am' affirmation that he is the source of eternal life and salvation for all who turn to him in faith. Martha clearly understands that Jesus is the Messiah promised by the prophets, and that he is the Son of God in a unique sense. Jesus underlines this divine status with the 'I AM' statement, which links him directly with God's revelation of Himself to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3: 14).

Despite his divine nature, Jesus reveals the depth of his compassion for and empathy with Mary and Martha through the tears he sheds outside Lazarus's tomb. He shows that he enters with full solidarity into the pain and suffering of humanity, and is not aloof and indifferent to the human situation. At this current time, when the world is in such turmoil and distress through the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, it is greatly reassuring to know that our Lord Jesus Christ cares deeply for his human brothers and sisters and empathises with our distress and suffering. He wants the best for us and brings his love, support and healing to the darkest situations.

His compassion is powerfully expressed through the raising from the dead of his dear friend Lazarus, as he calls him forth from the tomb in a true foretaste of the resurrection to come. This miracle brings reassurance that Christ's gift of eternal life prevails over sin and death. His healing for soul and body can be experienced in this life in extraordinary ways. More than this, his gift of eternal life beyond this earthly existence is extended to all find their way to him in faith. Through the raising of Lazarus and his own Resurrection, Jesus Christ gives us the great assurance of spiritual life and consciousness beyond the embodied state. Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord of Life, and it is right whenever we feel fearful or vulnerable that we put our full trust in Him! Amen.

### **Prayers.**

*Keep us good Lord under the shadow of your mercy, and in this time of uncertainty and distress, sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are affected by the Coronavirus through illness, isolation or anxiety, that they may know your peace, comfort, relief and recovery, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

*We pray for doctors, nurses, the emergency services and medical researchers, that through their courage, skill and insight, many may be restored to health. We pray also for key workers and volunteers, giving thanks for the support they bring to community life in these very difficult times. We pray that all who put themselves at risk through their service to the community may be kept safe and free from harm.*

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*We pray for the vulnerable and fearful, the gravely ill and the dying, and all suffering in mind, body, emotion and spirit, that they may know your comfort and peace. We name all whose special needs are on our minds at this time in the silence of our own hearts ...*

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*We pray for the recently departed, that they may rest in peace and rise in glory, and that light perpetual may shine upon them. Especially we remember Elsie Hudson, Havelock Binns, & all whose year's mind falls at this time; may they rest in peace & rise in glory, and light perpetual shine upon them; and may your comfort and peace be with all who mourn.*

*Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

*Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples 'I am with you always'. Be with us today as we offer ourselves to you, and hear our prayers for others and for ourselves, and keep us in your care. Amen.*

### **Notices.**

Due to the current pandemic, our churches and halls continue to be closed, and services and public meetings suspended. Continuing support for ongoing prayer & worship will be offered by email, mail-outs to those not on the internet and up-to-date information on the website: [www.standrewandstalban.org.uk](http://www.standrewandstalban.org.uk) Contact Bob Lawrie at [bob@standrewandstalban.org.uk](mailto:bob@standrewandstalban.org.uk) or Tel: 020 8857 0685 to add items.

For pastoral support call Revd Ian 020 8851 1909/07709 827355, Revd Tim 07504 829190 or Revd Anne 020 8297 8761.