

Reflection Saturday Week 16 Sts Martha, Mary and Lazarus 2023

Martha was the sister of Mary of Bethany and Lazarus. In the West, her feast day comes a week after that of St Mary Magdalene because of the old and probably erroneous tradition that Mary Magdalene was the same person as Martha's sister. Modern scholarship recognises the mistake, Martha, Mary and Lazarus have since 2021 been celebrated together on this day, formerly assigned to Martha alone.

The hallmarks for today's feast are *love, faith and trust*. A translation of Martha's name is *Lady, noted for hard-work, service, cleaning*. It is difficult to know if the definitions were applied after the gospel story of Martha or whether she lived up to her name. The name Mary, Myriam in Hebrew, means *beloved, bitter, wished-for-child* all of which can be applied to Mary. While Lazarus' name means *God has helped*.

Our names are important, especially the name Christian, which if like Martha, Mary and Lazarus we live with love faith and trust will mean following in the footsteps of Jesus and living our faith in action.

Pope Francis writes:

In the household of Bethany, the Lord Jesus experienced the family spirit and friendship of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and for this reason, the Gospel of John states that he loved them.

Martha generously offered him hospitality, Mary listened attentively to his words and Lazarus promptly emerged from the tomb at the command of the One who humiliated death.

A man and his wife were sitting in the living room discussing a living will. The man says "Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug!" His wife stands up, unplugs the TV and throws out all the beer.