

### **Thought for the Day 3 July 2020 Richard Barton (All Hallows)**

John 11:1-11 Premonitions of mortality

“I intend to live forever. Or die trying!” Is one of those apparently stupid quips (supposedly from Marx (Groucho, that is!)) that perhaps hides a deeper truth. Most of us fear death and the COVID crisis has mixed the anguish of being unable to visit those we love, whether healthy in the next town or dying on an intensive care unit, with the fear that even if we are relatively healthy and young, we could be struck down with this virus and our lives taken from us.

Jesus was clearly very close friends with Mary, Martha and Lazarus, a family in Bethany near Jerusalem. They crop up in several places in the gospels. Jesus was up at the other end of the country around Galilee when he heard Lazarus was ill. Typically Jesus words in Johns gospel are cryptic, they were to the disciples I think they are to us today. He initially doesn't go straight to Bethany but stays where he is for a couple of days. I wonder if the situation isn't just a bit too close to home. He sees in the situation, that Lazarus will die, a premonition of his own death, and that is hard to face. Jesus is after all this impossible combination of very human and very God. And then he steels himself and says “Lets go and wake up Lazarus” and Thomas with typical deadpan pessimism says, “Yes let us go and die with him” and you don't know whether he means Lazarus or Jesus!

I haven't had a friend or relative who has been near death from COVID during this crisis, and I cannot imagine the anguish and fear of those in that situation. I can simply pray that those near to death and those close to them might have a deeper understanding of the words Jesus words says to Mary and Martha when he meets them. “I am the resurrection and life. Whoever believes in me, though they may die, they shall live”