

We're being the Body of Christ



BY BISHOP ROB, COMMISSARY BISHOP

THIS autumn, the world has dared to create a moment for the cries of the poorest to be heard. The COP26 conference on the environment has made clear the link between climate change, Covid and economic policy. Those affected most live a long way from our diocese.

Yet we are the Body of Christ, not a bag of body parts. We're sisters and brothers with those in the poorest parts of the world who are most affected. What might we do to help? How can we use the characters in our churches to make a difference to our world? I've reflected on the story of the raising of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. I wonder which of those people you relate to?

I sometimes wonder why Jesus felt that Lazarus was so special. Why did he choose to raise him, rather than all the others who died? Some commentators reflect that Lazarus never speaks, and he lives with his sisters. There is no mention of his work.

Is Lazarus silent? Can he not, in fact, speak? Does Lazarus have a disability or learning difficulty? Is this moment on a par with Jesus telling Peter after the resurrection to "feed my lambs". Is this a clear imperative to search out the marginalised, the broken, the silenced, the wounded, the lost? If yes, this turns our ministry upside down in this diocese. Who is the Lazarus in your community? How

do we live, work, and do church to respond to this bias to the poor?

How about Martha? Our churches are full of Marthas, the doers, the ones who get on with the tasks in hand. The ones who serve, the pragmatic ones. As church leaders, we love the Marthas. But sometimes they miss God's imagination, as they are so involved in the everyday.

What about Mary? She is dangerous. Mary has sat at the feet of Jesus and listened, and Jesus also dares to listen to her. She kneels at Jesus' feet, in anguish and pain. This is real, this is honest. Death hurts, Mary is hurting, as the world hurts. The only thing she can do is shout at God. But her anguish leads to the raising of Lazarus - a precursor to the Cross. Heaven forbid that our church culture might give space for such reality!

Finally, reflecting upon Jesus. He is vulnerable and lets himself be moved by Mary. When the honest cries of the poor, hurting and grieving are shared, God weeps. But it does not end there. He prays and acts and commands Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Lazarus - and possibly Mary and Martha - have been liberated.

God's action affects the whole community, having been moved by honesty. Will you also learn from Jesus, as one who listens, weeps, asks, and acts?

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