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PRAY WITH ME

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Tender and loving God,  
your gift of friendship lifts our hearts  
in hope and gratitude.

Our relationship with you calls us to  
relationship with our friends  
and with all those we serve in our  
health care ministry.

Continue your friendship with us, Lord.  
Lift us up and keep us faithful in friendship  
to one another,  
that your healing purposes may shine  
through this broken, beloved world.  
In your holy name we pray.

AMEN.



FIFTH WEEK OF LENT



**“When Jesus saw Mary weeping  
and the others who had come  
with her weeping,  
he became perturbed and deeply  
troubled, and said, ‘Where have  
you laid him?’  
They said to him, ‘Sir, come and see.’  
And Jesus wept.”**

JOHN 11:33-35



## The centerpiece of this fifth week of our Lenten retreat is the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

In this story, it is easy to miss the central part played by relationship. There is very little in our lives that is not rooted in relationships. These connections draw us deep into life's meaning. They call us to our best selves, to faithful companionship and to conversion of life when we fail others in that companionship.

The household in Bethany of Martha, Mary and their brother, Lazarus, was dear to Jesus. He had spent many hours among them, enjoying their hospitality and a fully mutual friendship. From his childhood on, Jesus learned the ways of friendship, and, like any us, his friendships deepened his humanity and helped teach him about God (see Hebrews 5:7-10).

We can easily understand Jesus' weeping at the death of his friend Lazarus. This came from the depths of his human experience. But we need also to understand the mystery of his weeping from the depths of his being as God. For Christians, Jesus is both fully human and fully the Son of God. In this story we see him fully inhabiting both realities. The deep groan from within him is also God's heartbreak in the face of human suffering and loss. To submit to relationship in this broken world is to choose to love and, in that love, to risk suffering. This story helps us see that God loves us, and in choosing this love, chooses to suffer not only for us, but with us and alongside us, every step of the way.

In our health care ministry we are privileged to glimpse this mystery every day: families who keep faithful vigil for days or weeks at the bedside of dying loved ones; colleagues who reach out in support of one another in time of need; volunteers who show up faithfully to visit those in long-term care. The faithfulness of others is a testament to the God who

has chosen to be in relationship with us and will not rest until that relationship is fully healed of all suffering and death. Until the story is fully done and creation once again the Garden that God intended, God journeys with us, sorrows for and within us. The unique friendship of Jesus with Lazarus and his sisters became the means of his greatest miracle and prelude to his own resurrection. Our own friendship with God and one another, especially in our health care setting, offers us this same tender hope of life and resurrection.

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### FOR REFLECTION

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*“No one has greater love than this,  
to lay down one's life for one's friends.”*

(John 15:13)

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- ◇ How can you continue to nurture God's friendship with you this Lent?
- ◇ What friendships in your life lift you up and speak to you of God's friendship? How can you express your gratitude for them?
- ◇ Is there a relationship at work or among your friends that needs mending this Lent?