

# MARTHA AND MARY

## LUKE 10:38-42, JOHN 11:1-43

Women in the Bible Series

### OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, help us to recognise you as our friend, even when, as Martha, we are disappointed with your response to us. Help us to be aware that you love us always.

Amen.

### EXEGESIS (POEM)

You know you're my best friend  
Even though we don't always agree.  
You, me, my sister and my brother/The four of us  
Had such a closeness.  
Mother and Auntie Mary say/ Is like the four of we tumble  
From one womb same time.

As children we spent the / Too infrequent holidays/ Romping like puppies  
Racing, mud ball, wrestling; These I always won, or Lazarus.  
Mary and you were/ Champions at hide and seek or/ Wordplay.  
Lazarus and me, We provided the/ Flagpole and guy ropes for  
You and Mary/ Floating in the winds.  
We kept you anchored/ In the rough earth of reality/ You gave us/ Wings to the clouds.  
You remember that time/ When you came in/ With your hungry belly troupe  
To talk philosophy.  
Mary and Lazarus/ Sitting right there with you.

So I quarrel that Mary/ Prims up there with menfolk. Leaving me the work.  
And you come fresh with me, bout/ "Martha, you too worry/ Over everything"  
I vex too bad. But after, When all of us/ White with flour, You touch my nose  
With your scaly finger/ And smile. "Martha, Martha, You fret too much. Don't you see we  
manage? Mary had the right idea/ God will take care of those/ Who cool."  
And the piece of rock/ That settling in my heart/ Like a tombstone/ Just roll away  
And I resurrect.

### REFLECTION

Martha, the other sister of the Bethany duo, has a very powerful voice. In Luke's gospel, she is referred to as the owner of the house, and she is the chief spokesperson in the John account. In fact, she proclaims Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God.

Some commentators have interpreted Jesus' words to Martha in the Luke story as a serious reprimand, which it might or might not have been. In the poem, Martha, who speaks with a Caribbean accent, is certainly annoyed with her siblings and with Jesus and his 'hungry belly crew' who come to talk philosophy and abandon her in the kitchen. Her resentment is like a gravestone, but when they all come to help, and Jesus explains that God takes of 'those who cool', her anger rolls away.

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How often do we allow anger and resentment to build up in us, killing our friendships and our love?
- What can we do to bring about their resurrection?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Forgive us, Lord, when hold onto anger and resentment and cannot let it go.

Help us, Lord, to forgive and love others and to allow ourselves to be forgiven and loved by you.

Amen.

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Evie Vernon blogs for USPG at <http://blog.weareus.org.uk/wpress/>