

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

GOSPEL

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Jesus came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking. Now Martha who was distracted with all the serving said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister is leaving me to do the serving all by myself? Please tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered: 'Martha, Martha,' he said 'you worry and fret about so many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part; it is not to be taken from her.'

(Luke 10:38-42)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The attitude taken by Mary in this text is one of discipleship. To sit at the feet of the Master is to be a follower or disciple. In Jesus' time, such an attitude was often only the preserve of men.
- Mary and Martha, the sisters of this text, are also mentioned in the Gospel of John. While Luke does not tell us the name of the village where they live, John does. They live in Bethany, just outside Jerusalem, with their brother, Lazarus.

EXPLORING THE WORD

On our first reading of this text, many of us would feel sympathy with Martha, who is left to do all the work. But a more careful reading of the text uncovers the real problem. Martha is ready 'to welcome Jesus into her house'. And yet she becomes so preoccupied with the fuss of getting food ready that she is failing to do exactly what she set out to do: offer welcome to the person of Jesus. Mary, on the other hand, is attentive to the words and teachings of Jesus. Who has offered the true welcome? The responses of these two women are not in opposition, but rather indicate two ways of acting that should become integrated in how we relate to others: attentive friendship and generous and practical service. The gospel of the Good Samaritan from last week shows us a model of selfless service. Here we are presented with the other side of the story: the need to also be attentive and to listen to the word of God so that we don't get caught up in activities and preoccupations that are ultimately not important.

- With which of the women in this story do you more readily identify?
- How might you cultivate the other side of yourself?
- Identify circumstances where both contemplation and action are required.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- What causes you to 'worry and fret'? Is this a distraction from God?
- What happens when you do take the time to be still and attentive to the voice of God?
- It is often difficult in the busyness of life to pay real attention to others. Spend time in pairs reviewing the week and recalling those times when you gave undivided attention to the important people in your life. Is there something to be learnt from this exercise? If you need to, resolve to do better this week!
- Make time this week to 'sit at the feet of the Master'. This could mean reading the Scriptures or other religious literature or listening to someone who can teach you something of the life of faith.
- Use today's prayer after Communion as your prayer this week:

*Graciously be present to your people, we pray, O Lord, and lead those you have imbued with heavenly mysteries to pass from former ways to newness of life.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen*

- Alternatively, you could spend some time each day praying without words. Make yourself still and close your eyes. Fix your heart on God, who dwells within you. If you find yourself being distracted, don't worry but turn your mind back to God.

