

Reflecting on the Sunday's Readings

The Better Part

16th Sunday in Ordinary times~ Year C. 07/21/2019

Genesis 18:1-10 Colossians 1:24-28 Luke 10:38-42

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A few years ago, my wife Pansy and I were entertaining a friend at our home. When he arrived he and I sat in the den talking while Pansy busied herself in the kitchen getting the meal ready. After a few minutes, our friend got up, went into the kitchen, took Pansy by the hand and brought her back to the den, and asked her to sit with us. He said that the meal was not important and that he was there to spend time with both of us.

What do you want from a Homily? As we gather here to worship this evening, what is it that you want me to speak about? Many of you will answer, “A message that links the Scripture of the day to my life here and now.” That’s pretty much what the Church says a homily should be. So let’s see if we can do just that. Let me begin by asking you this question. Are we workaholics or do we take time to lift our heads up, breathe deeply. Observe the beauty around us and listen to the birds sing? Do we miss what God is doing in the world because of our busyness or are we attentive to the voice of God on a daily basis? Today’s readings are all about comfort and hospitality and about how we go about spending our time.

Many of us can see ourselves in Martha. Like her, we get up each morning with a to-do-list a mile long that we came up with during the night as we laid in bed. We are so committed to serving God and others, we hit the ground running. We are critical that others are not as committed and/or as efficient as we are. So we busy ourselves, just like Martha.

Interestingly, Jesus never condemns Martha, or us, for our commitment to work, especially if the work is for him. What he does attempt to do is to help us realize that when our to-do-list or our tendency to serve becomes excessive, starts creating anxiety in our heart, and distracts us from enjoying him, it is time to step back and **re-evaluate**. And he helps us do that by telling about two wonderful, godly women, Mary and Martha his friends, who wanted to serve him and his ministry in their own particular way.

This gospel passage tells us nothing about Mary’s inclination to serve, or her plans for ensuring that Jesus and his disciples had something to eat when they visited her and Martha. What it **does** tell us is that in the midst of a busy life and a full agenda, Mary chose to come apart from her duties to spend time listening to and talking with Jesus. No doubt I am sure, she was just as fully conscious of all that needed to be done as was Martha, but she undoubtedly was also conscious of how important and essential Jesus’ life and teaching is. Mary knew Jesus needed company that day. He did not need a

housekeeper but someone who would just spend time with him, being with him, listening to him. Just like our friend who came for dinner.

The story of Jesus with Mary and Martha is to challenge our priorities so that we come to see that fellowship with the Lord, being with the Lord and hearing his word should always precede the work we do for the Lord. If we don't spend time with the Lord, how would we know what he wants us to do? Recall what Jesus said, "***Only one thing is necessary! Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken from her.***"

In order to enter into service with the Lord, we must **first** have a relationship with the Lord. Do you have a routine, a program of daily relationship with the Lord? Many people fulfill this by taking part daily in the Eucharist where they can also hear the word of God. Others schedule a quiet time when they can pray and read the word of God. In our modern day society, when everything is held in a constant fast-forward-mode, how many times have we disregarded the Lord's invitation, our Lord's standing invitation to "come away by ourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile."

Jesus said, "***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.***" Peace is directly **connected** to Jesus the **giver** of peace, and the only way we can access that peace is through his presence. He extends an open invitation to, "***Come away with him to a deserted place and rest awhile.***" And while we are there, let us pray for our country and for peace.

The world would be a better place if more people took hospitality as seriously as Abraham and Martha did. But where the Old Testament prizes hospitality above all other virtues and sees it as a sacred responsibility, the New Testament prizes one thing even more: **the urgency of prayer and the Gospel.** **Doing the work of the Lord is great. But knowing the Lord of the work must always come first.**

In the midst of our worry-filled world the Son of God, Jesus Christ, appears and offers us new life, the life of the Spirit of God. But this new life requires us to spend a few moments a day in the presence of God when we can listen to his voice in the midst of our many concerns.

When Jesus visits someone, it is to give that person a gift, the most beautiful one there is: the gift of his love, the gift of his grace, the source of eternal life! And so my brothers and sisters, in a few minutes when we approach the Lord's table to receive Him in the Eucharist, to receive the greatest gift that one can ever receive, let us do so with fullness of heart, with fullness of faith, with fullness of love! This is what Mary and Martha did when they received Jesus into their home. And as always, let us also ask him to guide our thoughts, our feelings and our actions.

When preparing the weekly bulletin, the office staff takes time to pick the right image to depict the theme of the week. This week's bulletin depicts Jesus sitting and talking and at his feet seated and listening intently is, I presume, Mary from our Gospel story today. I encourage you to take the bulletin home and when you pray look at the image and picture yourself in place of Mary and listen to what Jesus is saying to you.

So, how about it? Can we commit a few minutes each day of our busy life to read the Scriptures and pray? Just a few minutes? The Lord is inviting us. If you take up his invitation, I guarantee that you will find inner peace. Put that to the test. When you leave mass this evening, before you rush off to your favorite restaurant for the weekend special, pause for a while in the gathering space. Listen to the noise, the chatter, the busyness and then, step into the Blessed Sacrament Chapel for a complete transformation and feel the quiet, the calm, the serenity and the peace and spend some quiet time with Him. He is waiting for you.

What do you want from a Homily? "A message that links the Scripture of the day to my life here and now." I hope I was able to do that for you this evening. We, like Mary and Martha, do have the freedom of choice and can either choose each day to pause in his presence, or not to. Like Mary, I hope we will choose the better part. ***"Come away with me to a deserted place and rest awhile."***

The Lord is on Watch. He is always near. The Lord is my Shepherd. I walk with no fear.

May God Bless each and every one of you.

