

16th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; July 17th 2022
Genesis 18: 1-10; Colossians 1: 24-28; Luke 10: 38-42

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Today's first reading and the gospel hold the theme of hospitality. We have just heard how Abraham treated the messengers of God serving them with rich food and listening to their words carefully. As a result he got the promise of a son. In the gospel we see two sisters Martha and Mary, good friends of Jesus, showing him hospitality in different ways. *For Martha service comes first whereas for Mary relationship is important.* Martha thought that serving the Lord by preparing a good meal would be the best way to express her hospitality. In her worry and stress to treat Jesus materially, Martha totally forgot the guest whom she was trying hard to serve. But on the other hand Mary preferred personal relationship with Jesus to material hospitality, means sitting at his feet and listening to him.

In this context we should appreciate both sisters who were engaged in showing hospitality to Jesus in their own way. **If Martha had opened her home and kitchen for Jesus Mary had opened her heart to him.** Of course, Jesus was not criticizing Martha for preparing a good meal for him. Rather he was asking her to calm down and find some time to listen to him too. Commenting on the material worries of the people Jesus says in **Matthew chapter 6: 33, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides.”** This is what Martha missed. According to the Book of **Ecclesiastes chapter 3, “There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens.”** Yes, there is a time for work, time to help others, time to relax, time to listen and time to pray. When we lose the balance between these appointed times we will never be able to attain our goal.

There is a temptation in our modern culture of hectic schedules and the relentless pursuit of productivity to measure our worth by how busy we are, by how much we accomplish, or by how well we meet the expectations of others. Many, like Martha are pulled in different directions, feeling worried and distracted by so many things. It is true that much of our business and distraction stem from wanting to care and provide for our families, we want to give our children every opportunity to enrich their lives, we want to serve our neighbors and the Lord. So where is the balance? If all our activities leave us no time to be still in the Lord's presence and listen to his word, we are likely to end up more anxious and troubled.

Mark in his gospel 3:14 tells us that when Jesus called the apostles to follow him, he called them for a dual purpose: “To be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message.” So we are called by the Lord, first of all to be with him, to know him, to have fellowship with him and be nourished by his word and, secondly, to do the Lord’s work, to serve the Lord in others. *Charitable work and hospitality to someone are good and appreciated by Jesus, but if we do them forgetting Jesus, any good work will never last long.* Mother Theresa was one of the busiest humanitarian workers in the world. Nobody ever did so much for the poor as she did. But she never did anything without spending time with Jesus. It is her union with Christ in prayer gave her the meaning and energy to work for the poor. Even Jesus, after a hectic day of preaching and working miracles, left the crowd now and then to go to an isolated place to converse with his Father.

Living in a busy world, very often we think that we can accomplish much if we steal the one hour we spend for the Holy Mass or the half hour we may spend for the personal prayer. Thus people find excuses to skip the Sunday Mass and personal prayers. The result is, they become stressed, overburdened and disappointed; because Jesus is not with them to help. The message of today’s gospel is not that whether we choose between Mary and Martha; rather we need to choose both in our lives. We should be Mary and Martha in our Christian life. But we should keep the balance between them. Lord gives us 168 hours a week for our use and out of which he is asking from us only one hour on weekend and at least half hour a day for personal prayers. St. Francis De Sales says, **“A person has to pray at least half hour a day. If he/she is too busy then spend one hour in prayer.”**

“If Christ Jesus dwells in a man as his friend and noble leader, that man can endure all things, for Christ helps and strengthens us and never abandons us. He is a true friend.”- Saint Teresa of Avila