

GOSPEL

LUKE 10:38-42

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.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

In this Sunday's Gospel passage Luke the Evangelist narrates Jesus' visit to the house of Martha and Mary, Lazarus' sisters. They receive him, and Mary sits at his feet to listen to him; she leaves what she was doing in order to be close to Jesus: she does not want to miss any of his words. Everything is to be set aside when he comes to visit us in our lives; his presence and his words come before all else.

The Lord always surprises us: when we truly focus on listening to him, clouds disappear, doubts give way to truth, fears to serenity, and life's various situations find the right placement. When the Lord comes, he always puts things in order, even us.

In this scene of Mary of Bethany at Jesus' feet, Saint Luke shows the prayerful attitude of the believer, who is able to be in the Teacher's presence to listen to him and be in harmony with him. It means pausing a few minutes during the day to gather yourself in silence, to make room for the Lord who 'is passing' and to find the courage to stay somewhat 'on the sidelines' with him, in order to return later with serenity and strength, to everyday matters. Commending the conduct of Mary, who "has chosen the good portion", Jesus seems to repeat to each of us: "Do not allow yourselves to be overwhelmed by things to do, but

first and foremost listen to the Lord's voice, in order to properly carry out the tasks that life assigns to you".

Then there is the other sister, Martha. Saint Luke says that it is she who receives Jesus. Perhaps Martha was the older of the two sisters; we do not know. But surely this woman had the charm of hospitality. Indeed, while Mary listened to Jesus, Martha is completely caught up in many services. That is why Jesus says to her: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things". With these words he certainly does not condemn the attitude of service, but rather the stress with which one lives at times. We too share Saint Martha's worries and, after her example, we recommend ensuring — in our families and in our communities — that one may experience the sense of welcome, of fraternity, so that each one may feel 'at home', especially the little ones and the poor when they knock at our door.

Thus, today's Gospel passage reminds us that the wisdom of the heart lies precisely in knowing how to combine these two elements: contemplation and action. Martha and Mary indicate the path to us. If we want to savour life with joy, we must associate these two approaches: on the one hand, 'being at the feet' of Jesus, in order to listen to him as he reveals to us the secret of every thing; on the other, being attentive and ready in hospitality, when he passes and knocks at our door, with the face of a friend who needs a moment of rest and fraternity. This hospitality is needed.

May Mary Most Holy, Mother of the Church, give us the grace to love and serve God and brethren with the hands of Martha and the heart of Mary, so that, in always listening to Christ, we may be artisans of peace and hope. And this is interesting: with these two approaches we will be artisans of peace and hope.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- We can all suffer from 'too many things to do' and thus lose focus on what is truly important — deepening relationships with God and one another. In what ways do I experience this reality in my life?
- The invitation in this passage is to remain focused on Jesus no matter the activity in which we are involved? Sometimes this will mean stopping and resting in his presence, at other times drawing him into the busyness of our lives. How might you go about doing this and creating balance?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.