

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.'

HOMILY OF ST JOHN PAUL II*20 July 1980, Translated from Italian, Excerpt*

We have just read in the Gospel according to Luke the episode of the hospitality granted to Jesus by Martha and Mary. These two sisters, in the history of Christian spirituality, have been understood as emblematic figures referring, respectively, to action and contemplation: Martha is very busy with housework, while Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus to listen to his word. We can take two lessons from this Gospel text.

First of all, we should note Jesus' final sentence: "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." He thus forcefully emphasises the fundamental and irreplaceable value that listening to the Word of God has for our existence: it must be our constant point of reference, our light and our strength. But we must listen to it.

We need to know how to be silent, create spaces of solitude or, better, of private encounters for intimacy with the Lord. We need to know how to contemplate. Today's man feels a great need not to limit himself to pure material concerns, and instead to integrate his technical culture with superior and detoxifying contributions from the world of the spirit. Unfortunately, our daily life risks or even experiences cases, more or less widespread, of interior pollution. But the contact of faith with the word of the Lord purifies us, elevates us and restores energy.

Therefore, we must always keep before the eyes of our hearts the mystery of love, with which God came to meet us in his Son, Jesus Christ: the object of our contemplation is all here, and from here comes our salvation, the redemption from every form of alienation and especially from that of sin. In essence, we are invited to do as the other Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). It is on this condition that we will not be men of a single dimension, but rich in the same greatness as God.

But there is a second lesson to be learned; and that is that we must never see a contrast between action and contemplation. In fact, we read in the Gospel that it was "Martha" (and not Mary) who welcomed Jesus "into her home". Moreover, today's First Reading suggests to us the harmony between the two: the episode of the hospitality granted by Abraham to the three mysterious characters sent by the Lord, who, according to an ancient interpretation, are actually an image of the Holy Trinity, teaches us that even with our most minute daily tasks we can serve the Lord and be in contact with him. And, since this year marks the 15th centenary of the birth of Saint Benedict, let us remember his famous motto: "Pray and work", *Ora et labora!* These words contain an entire program: not of opposition but of synthesis, not of contrast but of fusion between two equally important elements.

This leads us to a very concrete lesson, which can be expressed in the form of a question: to what extent are we capable of seeing in contemplation and prayer a moment of authentic energy for our daily commitments? and, on the other hand, to what extent are we capable of instilling our work to the core with a leavening communion with the Lord? These questions can serve for an examination of conscience and become a stimulus for a resumption of our daily life, which is both more contemplative and more active.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head/Heart: St John Paul II ends his homily by asking two challenging questions. Here are simplified versions that we can use for our discussion and sharing:



To what extent can we truly find real energy for our daily lives through moments of prayer and contemplation?

And to what extent can we allow our work to be deeply shaped by a living connection with the Lord?

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. Offer 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 praying the ‘Glory Be’.