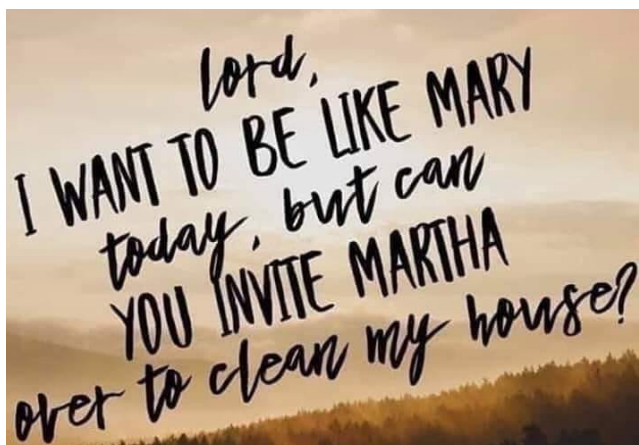


# LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

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**SIXTEENTH SUNDAY in  
ORDINARY TIME**

**17th July 2022**

**Luke 10:38** Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. <sup>39</sup> She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; <sup>42</sup> there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

## COMMENTS

As is well known, this delightful scene is found only in Luke's Gospel. It is impossible not to link with John 11-12, where a family trio (Mary, Martha and Lazarus) appear again. However, Luke knows nothing of a brother, even though a Lazarus is mentioned. He is, however, a fictional character in a parable.

Otherwise, Mary and Martha are unknown in Luke's Gospel or even elsewhere in the NT. Apart from these historical details, the story touches on the balance of work and prayer.

## Thought for the day

Being busy is a sort of cultural value among us—and rightly. "If you want something done, ask a busy person." But, of course, the question of balance arises. There are indeed other needs and other hungers. These include simple human things like time for friends. Even hospitality—which is always work—can get in the way of really meeting. Something similar can be said of time for reflection, meditation and prayer. Time is not really the issue—after all, we manage to find time to

## MARTHA AND MARY

The parable of the Good Samaritan ended with the instruction "Go and do likewise". Being a disciple is not about ideas, it is about action. However that parable is followed with the Martha and Mary story which shows that the action can sometimes be misdirected and undertaken in a way that makes us lose sight of what really matters. We have to be careful here, because Jesus is not telling Martha that her work is not important, nor is he commending Mary for doing nothing. He is simply reminding his followers that if we want to serve him we must first listen to him - we need to be people of prayer before we can be people of action. Otherwise our actions can be just about us and it is possible to do good things for all kinds of bad reasons like, for example, our need to be needed, or our exaggerated belief in the importance of our own contribution. Such behaviour can easily undermine the message of the good news which must always be about Jesus and his kingdom.

## SEAN GOAN—*Let the Reader Understand, Year C*

However we interpret the roles of Mary and Martha in the Jesus community, this is a beautiful passage about the importance of being nourished by Jesus for ministry in all its forms. There is a time for action, but constant frantic activity is neither healthy nor sustainable. When we are so bogged down in the craziness around us, Jesus is clear about the way forward. First, sit and listen to him; then we may be better prepared for the challenges that we face.

*When we are 'occupied' with many tasks we can become drained, and if we ignore this for too long it can lead to burnout. How do you nourish yourself? Can you find more time to sit with Jesus?*

*Look again at Jesus and Mary in today's gospel. Jesus transcended expectations about traditional women's roles. Where do you see a division of roles along gender lines played out in our Church today?*

**TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT—Go Deeper**

## POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The two sisters symbolize the contemplative and active dimensions of life, at times difficult to balance. What wisdom have you learned through life experiences on how to strike a balance between prayer and action?
2. Many people misunderstand hospitality. They worry and fret about decorating the house and preparing abundant food. Yet sometimes it is something else that is needed to make people feel at home, namely, to sit with guests and to listen to them speaking. What has been your experience of being a cherished guest and when have you been able to make others feel welcome and at home?
3. We can make the same mistake in relation to people who are important to us in life: children, friends, parents, or others. We can worry and fret about doing things for them when perhaps the important thing is to give them time and to listen to them. What does your experience tell you?
4. When it comes to welcoming God into our lives, one appropriate response is to give time listening to God's word. When have you found time devoted to the word of God enriching for you?

**JOHN BYRNE—*Intercom***

## POPE FRANCIS— *THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL*

“The problem is not always an excess of activity, but rather activity undertaken badly, without adequate motivation, without a spirituality which would permeate it and make it pleasurable.” (No 82)

“Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization!” (No 83)

## SCRIPTURE PRAYERS

Lord, many people misunderstand hospitality. They worry and fret about preparing plenty of food and decorating the house. But few things are needed to make people feel at home, indeed only one, which is to sit with our guests and listen to them speaking.

Lord, we pray for parents today. Let them not fall into the error of worrying and fretting about doing many things for their children, then complaining that no one is helping them. Remind them that the only essential thing is to sit down at the feet of their children and listen to them.

*“The creator, the source of all, is in the heart of each one of us.” ... The Upanishads*

Lord, there is a Martha and a Mary within each of us  
– a part of ourselves which is active and busy,  
– another part which sits at your feet and listens trustingly to your word.  
We need our active self to accomplish your will, but the listening self is the best part, and we must not allow it to be taken from us.

Lord, we thank you for listening communities,  
-Bible sharing groups;  
– alcoholics anonymous;  
– Montessori schools.  
What marks them out from others is simplicity. Those responsible know that few things are needed to make a community, and the one thing that must not be taken away is listening to every member of the group as if sitting at the Lord's feet.

**MICHEL DE VERTEUIL—*Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels, Year C***

## ***Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things...***

Jesus does not criticise her ministrations. How can he when he himself is teaching everyone by his example to welcome, serve and help others? What he is criticising is her nervous behaviour, under pressure of too much work to do.

Active and contemplative lives are not incompatible for Jesus, and neither are listening faithfully to his Word and being committed to a life of service to others. Rather, he draws attention to the danger of being engrossed in too much activity or being always in inner turmoil. Excess of work and anxiety over it quench the spirit in us, spreading uneasiness and stress more than peace and love.

Under pressure from diminishing resources, we are becoming accustomed to asking the most generous Christians for all kinds of commitments inside and outside the church. If at the same time we do not offer them the time and space to know Jesus, to listen to his word, and find nourishment in the gospel, we run the risk of increasing anxiety and stress in the church but not making space for Jesus' spirit and his peace. We will find communities kept alive by overburdened staff, but not witnesses who radiate the spirit and life of the Master.

**JOSÉ A PAGOLA—*Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C***