

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

Sixteenth Sunday of
Ordinary Time

Gospel Word
Luke 10:38–42

This week we have another memorable family story. It's the story of the two sisters, Mary and Martha, who were good friends of Jesus. A quick reading of the story suggests a simple explanation for most of us. Martha is the busy one, working herself to the bone while Mary relaxes as she listens to Jesus. At the conclusion of this story, Jesus says that Mary has chosen the better role. Then we all return to our busy lives, which resemble Martha's more than Mary's. Is it possible that deep down we don't believe that Mary's way is better?

Biblical scholars suggest that the main point of the story is about being a true disciple of Jesus. As Mary sits at Jesus' feet, Martha works. She is described as "anxious and worried about many things." Jesus was not saying that she should put aside her broom and dust cloth and sit down. The issue here is the quality of the attention each of the sisters was giving to Jesus. Martha was serving, and Mary was listening, an activity of attentiveness to her guest. Martha's actions call to mind the story of Simon the Pharisee who neglected to show Jesus the most basic hospitality.

Today's reading invites us to reflect on the quality of the hospitality we offer God and others. It reminds us that, beyond serving, or during it, genuine hospitality entails making room in our lives for God who enters our lives through so many different people.

Living the Word

Social commentators agree that we live in an over-scheduled, very demanding world. The average workweek, even in the midst of labor saving appliances and fast food, has been increasing over the last ten years. For many of us, portable phones and computers have allowed us to carry our work to wherever we are. We're always "on call." Can this be a spiritual problem? Absolutely. Our minds and bodies can be totally immersed in work. There may be little time for reflection, new learning, and prayer. Work can wear down the human spirit.

If we are constantly trying to get things done, if our to-do list is always right in front of us, if we consider a good day as a day when we got a lot done, then we may be missing something very important. It doesn't relate to what we do, but more to who we are, what's going on inside us, and how we attend to our relationships.

We were not created simply to do a lot of stuff, important as that may be. We were created to love God and neighbor through attentive and loving attitudes and actions. One way to tell whether our actions are loving is to check our interior feelings. Are we constantly filled with worry and anxiety like Martha? Or are we at peace, filled with at least some thought of Jesus' teachings, which then motivate us to action. Jesus was not being critical of Martha for working, but for not taking the time to be present to him. The challenge is clear: If we are all about work, we can easily lose something essential to human and Christian survival. How each of us responds to this will vary, but no one can escape this reality. As you are making or going over your to-do lists this week, keep in mind ways to be present to others.

One-line Prayer

Creator God, help us to find time to be present and enjoy the life you gave us. Amen.

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A Gospel Word for the Home

Luke 10:38–42

Many of us are classified as workaholics. We derive a certain satisfaction from the fact that we are busy 24/7—no doubt a shorthand created by a workaholic. If we are constantly trying to get things done, if our to-do list is always right in front of us, if we consider a good day as a day when we get a lot done, then we may be missing something very important—or not. It doesn't relate to what or how much we do, but more to who we are and what's going on inside of us and in our relationships with others.

Nothing is more important than having within oneself the heart of God. We were not created simply to do a lot of stuff, important though that may be. We were created to love God and neighbor, which results in loving actions. One way to tell whether we are loving or not is to check on our interior feelings. Are we constantly filled with worry and anxiety like Martha? Or are we pretty much at peace with what we are doing? So Jesus was not being critical of Martha for working, but for not taking the time to learn from him what was most important, like Mary was trying to do.

Parent Survival

If overwork is a danger for the general population, it is even more so for the typical parent. Women especially are vulnerable to the danger of all-encompassing work. Many moms today have a full-time job outside the home and a full-time job in the home. There is no simple solution to this situation except that no one can allow work to be his or her whole life. Everyone needs quiet time, reflective time, solitude, and prayer. In other words, being Martha is fine until we are overcome with worry and anxiety. Then we need some Mary-time. And this principle is not just for moms. Dads need the same. So ask yourself how you're doing on this. Is your life in balance? That's what Jesus is suggesting and that was two thousand years ago. And he didn't even have a BlackBerry®.

Car or Meal Talk

Kids can be workaholics as much as their parents. So talk about the topic as a family. Introduce your children to the notion of workaholism and tell them how you deal with it.

One-Line Prayer

Creator God, help us to find time to just sit at your feet and enjoy the life you gave us. Amen.