



LIVING THE GOSPEL

**16th Sunday in Ordinary Time.
July 20th 2025**

Theme: "Mary has chosen the better part."

Gathering Prayer

All: Show favor, O Lord, to your servants and mercifully increase the gifts of your grace, that, made fervent in hope, faith and charity, they may be ever watchful in keeping your commands. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Luke 10: 38-42

³⁸ In the course of their journey he came to a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat down at the Lord's feet and listened to him speaking.

⁴⁰ 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.'

⁴¹ But the Lord answered: 'Martha, Martha,' he said 'you worry and fret about so many things, ⁴² 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.'

Gospel Focus

The Mary and Martha story can be frustrating for many of us who like to serve others by doing. Of *course* Martha is worried about many things-she is trying to be a good host, to provide for the needs of her guests, and she is doing it without help that she may have been counting on, Jesus reminds us, though, that he calls us not to accomplishment but to relationship. Encounter with him is the basis of true faith, and time spent with him in prayer can strengthen us for service. When we put prayer first, we may find ourselves able to serve as Martha does, but without the anxiety and worry that hold her back from the joy Christ offers.

Gospel Reflection

Martha always get a bad rap. In traditional interpretations of her story, she is said to be preoccupied or anxious about the details of hospitality to attend well to her guest. Her sister, by contrast, sits in rapt attention at Jesus' feet, listening to his every word. When Jesus declares that it is Mary who has "chosen the better part," the message we are supposed to take away, according to many commentators, is that contemplation rather than active service is the harder but better choice and that no one can minister without first sitting and learning at Jesus' feet.

Recently New Testament scholars have proposed that Luke's concern in telling this story may be different from that. They have noticed that what concerns Martha is much *diakonia*, and her distress is over her sister leaving her to carry it out alone. Both the noun *diakonia* and the verb *dikonein* occur in verse 40.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, these terms refer primarily to ministerial service, as in Jesus' declaration of his mission "to serve," not to "to be served" (Mark 10:54; Luke 22:27). In New Testament times *diakonia* covered a wider range of ministries. In the case of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and the other Galilean women who "provided for" Jesus and the itinerant preachers "out of the resources," *diakonein* refers to financial ministry (the Greek word *hyparchonton* connotes monetary resources, Luke 8:3). This is the same nuance *diakonia* has in Acts 11:29 and 12:25 regarding Paul's collection for Jerusalem. In Acts 6:2 *diakonia* refers to table ministry, while in Acts 6:4 *diakonia* commotes ministry of the word. In Acts 1:25 *diakonia* is apostolic ministry. One individual in the New Testament is named a *diakonos*, Phoebe, "deacon of the church at Cenchreae" (Rom 16:1, NRSV)

Scholars are now thinking that the incident in today's gospel is not about preparing a meal; instead. Martha voices how burdened her heart is over the conflicts surrounding women's exercise of their ministries in the early church. Some people were greatly in favor of women evangelizers and teachers like Prisca (Acts 18:26); Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:3); women prophets like Philip's four daughters (Acts 21:9); and women heads of house churches, like Nympha (Col 4:15); Mary (Acts 12:12); Lydia (Acts 16:40), and Prisca (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19). Others, however, argued that a woman's place was in the home and that speaking and ministering in the public sphere belonged to the men (e.g. 1Cor 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-12). Luke takes the latter position, giving it validity by placing approval of the silent Mary on Jesus' lips.

There was never any question in the early church about women becoming disciples. Both Martha and Mary welcomed Jesus and the word he spoke (vv. 38-39). The controversy swirled around what women would do with what they learned while sitting at Jesus' feet. The answer Luke gave was quite understandable for his time. Today's gospel invites us to reflect on what answer Jesus might give today to the question of a woman's place in the ministries of the church as they have now evolved.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading – Genesis 18:1-10

¹ The Lord appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. ² Looking up, Abraham saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: ³ "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. ⁴ Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, ⁵ let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way." The men replied, "Very well, do as you have said." ⁶ Abraham hastened into the tent and told Sarah, "Quick, three measures of fine flour! Knead it and make rolls." ⁷ He ran to the herd, picked out a tender, choice steer, and gave it to a servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸ Then Abraham got some curds and milk, as well as the steer that had been prepared, and set these before the three men; and he waited on them under the tree while they ate. They asked Abraham, ⁹ "Where is your wife Sarah?" He replied, "There in the tent." ¹⁰ One of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son."

Responsorial Reading - Ps 15:2-3, 3-4, 5

R: He who does justice will live in the presence of the Lord.. (R)

One who walks blamelessly and does justice; who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue. **(R)**

Who harms not his fellow man, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; by whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the Lord. **(R)**

Who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent. One who does these things shall never be disturbed. **(R)**

Second Reading – Colossians 1:24-28

Brothers and sisters: ²⁴ Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, ²⁵ of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, ²⁶ the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past. But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, ²⁷ to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. ²⁸ It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

Sharing and Discussion

1. "Martha was distracted with all the serving..." What are the things that tend to distract you from being present to the Lord? In what ways do your "tasks" sometimes get in the way of your "relationships"?
2. In your journey of faith, how do you recognize when it is time to act and when it is time to rest in God's presence? What are these signs in your experience?
3. Is Jesus in your house? "If he were to come to your home, how would you welcome Him? Would you find yourself more like Mary, sitting and listening at His feet, or like Martha, busy with serving? Or perhaps a little of both?"

Closing Prayer

Leader: Lord God, you call us to keep your word with generous hearts, loving our neighbor and persevering in holiness. Hear our prayers we offer for ourselves and for all the world as we seek always to do your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.