

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 10:38-42 - Martha and Mary

In today's Gospel:

- Jesus is visiting his friends in Bethany: Lazarus, Martha & Mary.
- Martha is preparing something to eat: Maybe figs in a blanket - who knows.
- Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to Him speak.
- Martha, burdened with serving, complains to Jesus that Mary is not helping her.
- She asks Jesus, "Tell her to help me."
- Jesus says, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things."
- There is need of only **"One Thing."**
- Jesus tells Martha that her sister, Mary, has chosen the better part.

What does this gospel mean?

- This Gospel has been used to rate the value of contemplative nuns over working nuns: such as nurses and teachers,
- rating cloistered monks over diocesan priests.
- That Type "B" personalities are better than Type "A" personalities.
- People who spend time praying and reading are superior to people who help the sick or cook & serve funeral dinners.

There are books written about it, such as,

"Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World, Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life."

Most of us Catholics, men and women, naturally tend to gravitate to one of two poles:

There is the "Mary pole" and the "Martha pole"

Spiritually Mary's are attracted to:

- prayer, meditation and interiority.
- beautiful liturgy.
- retreats and spirituality workshops.
- reading spiritual books.
- novenas, rosaries and adoration.

Marthas, for their part, are busy and restless souls.

- the thought of sitting quietly for more than five minutes and listening for God's "still small voice" makes them itch.
- Marthas want to get things done.
- Plan and organize.
- follow a plan and schedule.
- They love to cook for church suppers and funerals.
- wash altar linens.
- The men would rather help out with physical work of all kinds around the parish.

So, which are you, Martha or Mary?

There is a test to determine which one you are.

- Seriously - it's called the **"Toothbrush Test!"**
- For me, every day begins with the toothbrush test.
- My electric toothbrush has a two-minute program, with little beeps at 30 second intervals;
- I'm supposed to spend 30 seconds on each quarter of my mouth.
- When I first got this toothbrush, I really enjoyed this systematic approach, and paid careful attention to the beeps.
- But now, the novelty has worn off, I find it very hard to focus on the program – because most mornings I am highly focused by my thoughts and plans, and by a sense of urgency about getting on with the day, getting to Mass on time and the last minute homily prep.
- So my toothbrush test alerts me to my mental and spiritual state; it reminds me that I have a choice: will I choose to begin the day in Mary mode, focused on the present (like my dental health), or will I be in Martha mode, focused on the future?
- Most of my days do begin, well before toothbrush time, on the Mary side. But even my prayer time can become too busy: too many readings to get through, too many lists to pray through.
- Strangely, though, for me, during Mass, I have very little problem with distractions. The proximity to the Altar and the Sacred Presence tells my Martha side to sit down next to Mary and listen to Jesus.

In this homily I intended to emphasize Mary,

but in it's preparation, I was a Martha again.

I had six typed pages just in prep work, just for this first few minutes..

Not only that, these pages containing lists of bullet notes..

Six different lists of bullet notes:

- lists with small circles
- lists with large circles
- lists with checkmarks
- lists with squares, triangles and
- of course, lists with stars.
- **I even have an electric toothbrush that beeps when it's time to move to the next list.**

So, what is Jesus saying to Martha about Mary? What is the "One Thing" He mentioned?

- Mary did chose the better part.
- She chose to sit at the feet of Jesus, her Creator, her Teacher, her Savior, her Friend.
- **She is being quiet and she is listening and she is letting Jesus "Love Her."**
- Jesus appreciates what Martha is doing - and it is important.
- But beside Martha's busyness, she is upset and frustrated that Mary is not helping.
- she's anxious and preoccupied with her feelings. She is wasting her time worrying.

- And, **Martha chose** to do what she was doing.
- **Mary chose** to do what she wanted and it was the “**Better Part.**”

We shouldn't be either a Martha or a Mary, We should be a “both, and”

- ✓ We learned the importance of the Corporal Works of Mercy,
- ✓ We learned the importance of the Spiritual Works of Mercy.
- ✓ The Beatitudes
- ✓ The Commandment to love one another.
- ✓ The parable of the Good Samaritan last week!
- ✓ We learned about the separation at the General Judgement between those who fed the hungry and those who didn't.

BUT, WE HAVE TO BE IN LOVE BEFORE WE SHOW LOVE.

We have to “BE” before we “DO.”

- ◆ You have to be a pilot before you fly a plane.
- ◆ You have to be a doctor before you do surgery.
- ◆ We have to Be in Love with God before we serve Him.

If you look at today's gospel painting, you'll notice it is not about Martha & Mary although there are paintings of Martha and Mary, but I chose Henry Tanner's remarkable painting of the “Angel Gabriel's annunciation of the Incarnation.” I chose this painting because Mary, the Mother of God is the perfect model of Love and Action

- ★ On the left side of the painting, you see a column of light that represents Gabriel.
- ★ On the right we see a young girl sitting on a simple bed. It's evident from the expression on her face that she was not expecting this encounter, and that her life is about to undergo a dramatic change.
- ★ Her hands are clasped together, and her face reflects a curious mixture of uncertainty and dauntless trust in what God is asking her through the angel's words.
- ★ When God asked Mary to become the Mother of His Son, she said “yes.”
- ★ Because Mary **is in Love with God.**
- ★ It wasn't an easy affirmation; she had no idea what her consent would imply.
- ★ There were only a few details: the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and her child would be the Son of the Most High.
- ★ He would be named Jesus and would rule over the house of Jacob forever.
- ★ There were no details relating to how it would affect her life.
- ★ No discussion of Pros and Cons, no contract, no mention of benefits.
- ★ Mary knew that God was calling her; God would give her the strength. She could offer her life in service without knowing the reward, **since love is its own reward.**
- ★ **Mary listened and Mary said, “yes!”**
- ★ **AND THEN... What did Mary do?** Mary put on her Martha sandals and walked to the hill country of Judea to help Elizabeth in her last months of pregnancy!

Like Mary, at the Annunciation, when we pray, when we are at Mass, when we are at adoration.

- ★ We should always remember:
- ★ God loved us first: ...from all eternity
- ★ And ...at the cross
- ★ When we were born.
- ★ So! When we pray, be still first, and listen. Let God Love Us!

When we were infants, we let our mothers (and fathers) just love us.

- ★ Our mothers nursed us, held us, kissed our infant cheeks a hundred times an hour and looked lovingly at us.
- ★ When Jesus looked at His Mother that Christmas morning, tears ran down His face because
- ★ He could now see His Mother through his Human Eyes and He could see tears were of Joy were already flowing down her face.
- ★ **This is love.**

And it is this love that motivates ALL of our wonderful and necessary Martha moments.

My last thought are for the men. Men, even if you're more like Mary in the Gospel than Martha, when you come home from work and want to just spend time talking with your wife and looking at her, if you see that she is busy working in the kitchen, or with the children, put on your Martha shoes and help her work while you are "looking at her." Remember about the "Hubby Points" that I have been explaining to you for some time.