



# Living the Gospel



**Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 18, 2010**

**Theme: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things."**

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## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** Father let the gift of your life continue to grow in us, drawing us from death to faith, hope and love. Keep us alive in Christ Jesus, Keep us watchful in prayer and true to his teaching till your glory is revealed to us. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: Luke 10:38-42**

<sup>38</sup> In the course of their journey he 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. <sup>40</sup> Now Martha, who was distracted with all the serving, came to him and 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.' <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered, 'Martha, Martha,' he said, 'you worry and fret about so many things, <sup>42</sup> and yet few are needed, indeed only one. It is Mary who has chosen the better part, and it is not to be taken from her.'

## Gospel Notes

**38-42.** Our Lord was heading for Jerusalem (Lk 9:51) and his journey took him through Bethany, the village where Lazarus, Martha and Mary lived—a family for whom he had a special affection, as we see in other passages of the Gospel (cf. Jn 11:1-45; 12: 1-9). St Augustine comments on this scene as follows: “Martha, who was arranging and preparing the Lord’s meal, was busy doing many things, whereas Mary preferred to find her meal in what the Lord was saying. In a way she deserted her sister, who was very busy, and sat herself down at Jesus’ feet and just listened to his words. She was faithfully obeying what the Psalm said: ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (Ps 46:10). Martha was getting annoyed, Mary was feasting; the former coping with many things, the latter concentrating on one. Both occupations were good” (*Sermon*, 103). Martha has come to be, as it were, the symbol of the active life, and Mary that of the contemplative life. However, for most Christians, called as they are to sanctify themselves in the middle of the world, action and contemplation cannot be regarded as two opposite ways of practicing the Christian faith: an active life forgetful of union with God is useless and barren; but an apparent life of prayer which shows no concern for apostolate and the sanctification of ordinary things also fails to please God. The key lies in being able to combine these two lives, without either harming the other. Close union between action and contemplation can be achieved in very different ways, depending on the specific vocation each person is given by God.

Far from being an obstacle, work should be a means and an occasion for a close relationship with our Lord, which is the most important thing in our life.

Following this teaching of our Lord, the ordinary Christian should strive to attain an integrated life—an intense life of piety and external activity, orientated towards God, practiced out of love for him and with an upright intention, which expresses itself in apostolate, in everyday work, in doing the duties of one’s state in life. “You must understand now more clearly that God is calling you to serve him *in and from* the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us every day in the laboratory, in the operating room, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well; there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it [...]. There

is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find him. That is why I can tell you that our age needs to give back to matter and to the most trivial occurrences and situations their noble and original meaning. It needs to restore them to the service of the Kingdom of God, to spiritualize them, turning them into a means and an occasion for a continuous meeting with Jesus Christ" (Bl. J. Escriva, *Conversations*, 114).

## **Gospel Reflection**

Hearing this familiar gospel story might lead us to jump to a hasty, either-or kind of interpretation: Mary's "better part" of listening, being taught, reflecting is a better choice than taking care of the usual daily chores! Jesus couldn't have been negating hospitality and taking care of the needs of others, however. After all, he had to eat, too! Perhaps a less hasty and more reflective interpretation of this gospel lies in another, more integrative direction: that "listening" must be more than sitting at Jesus' feet-it includes seeing and hearing him in all the activities and circumstances of life. Sometimes we listen when we are being taught. Sometimes we listen when we are serving. The point is, we must listen: to Jesus, to each other.

What is each of the people in the gospel story doing? Martha is serving; Mary is listening; Jesus is teaching. While Jesus says that Mary has the "better part," this doesn't necessarily mean that listening to Jesus is either the only or the easiest part. Listening to Jesus with a heart truly able to hear is difficult, indeed. Listening to Jesus is the "better part" only when it leads us to serve and teach as Jesus did. The effectiveness of our serving (and teaching, being disciples, caring for others, fulfilling our daily duties) is determined by the way we listen-to others, to Jesus through others.

The gospel is about hosts and guest and hospitality. Martha's "hospitality" was made edgy because of her becoming burden with the cooking and serving and focusing only on that, losing sight of Jesus. Martha is settling to be only a servant (and complaining about it at that!), while Jesus is looking for disciples. Mary's hospitality was more gracious than Martha's because she focus her attention on Jesus: "sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him." The surprise is that Jesus affirms that the "better part" is to listen, the stance of a disciple. The "better part" is to be disciple attuned to the Master!

A welcoming hospitality implies an "at-homeness" and belonging

that parallels the unique relationship of disciple to Master. This kind of discipleship hospitality always brings new life. The “better part” Jesus promises is not just listening and being a disciple, but it is also sharing the new life that Jesus offers with others. Discipleship and listening cannot be separated. Neither can listening and serving.

## **Living the Paschal Mystery**

Before we can carry on the mission of Jesus, we must become disciples by sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to him. In our time, we can hardly invite Jesus over for dinner. But there are ways that Jesus is present to us if we take the time to be present to him.

We usually address living the paschal mystery in terms of how we die to ourselves in our everyday living. This gospel suggests a radically different-and complementary-way of living the paschal mystery: taking the time to listen to Jesus. Practically speaking, this means that being attentive to the proclamation of the Scriptures (especially the gospel) during Mass. It means taking the time to be with Jesus in prayer-not just saying prayers but being quiet and listening to how Jesus speaks to our hearts. It means hearing Jesus in the cry of another for help. There is truly a great deal of self-sacrificing in letting go of our busyness in order to listen to Jesus and see him in all circumstances of our daily lives.

## **New and Old Testament links**

### **First Reading — Genesis 18: 1-10**

<sup>1</sup> Yahweh appeared to him at the Oak of Mamre while he was sitting by the entrance of the tent during the hottest part of the day. <sup>2</sup> He looked up, and there he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them, and bowed to the ground. <sup>3</sup> 'My lord,' he said, 'if I find favour with you, please do not pass your servant by' <sup>4</sup> Let me have a little water brought, and you can wash your feet and have a rest under the tree. <sup>5</sup> Let me fetch a little bread and you can refresh yourselves before going further, now that you have come in your servant's direction.' They replied, 'Do as you say.' <sup>6</sup> Abraham hurried to the tent and said to Sarah, 'Quick, knead three measures of best flour and make loaves.' <sup>7</sup> Then, running to the herd, Abraham took a fine and tender calf and gave it to the servant, who hurried to prepare it. <sup>8</sup> Then taking curds, milk and the calf which had been prepared, he laid all before them, and they ate while he remained standing

near them under the tree. <sup>9</sup> 'Where is your wife Sarah?' they asked him. 'She is in the tent,' he replied. <sup>10</sup> Then his guest said, 'I shall come back to you next year, and then your wife Sarah will have a son.' Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent behind him.

## **Responsorial Reading — Psalm 15:2-3, 3-4, 5**

<sup>2</sup> Whoever lives blamelessly, who acts uprightly, who speaks the truth from the heart <sup>3</sup> who keeps the tongue under control, who does not wrong a comrade, who casts no discredit on a neighbour, <sup>4</sup> who looks with scorn on the vile, but honours those who fear Yahweh, who stands by an oath at any cost, <sup>5</sup> who asks no interest on loans, who takes no bribe to harm the innocent. No one who so acts can ever be shaken.

## **Second Reading — Colossians 1: 24-28**

<sup>24</sup> It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to make up all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church, <sup>25</sup> of which I was made a servant with the responsibility towards you that God gave to me, that of completing God's message, <sup>26</sup> the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his holy people. <sup>27</sup> It was God's purpose to reveal to them how rich is the glory of this mystery among the gentiles; it is Christ among you, your hope of glory: <sup>28</sup> this is the Christ we are proclaiming, admonishing and instructing everyone in all wisdom, to make everyone perfect in Christ.

## **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

### **II. THE STAGES OF REVELATION**

#### **In the beginning God makes himself known**

**54** "God, who creates and conserves all things by his Word, provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. And furthermore, wishing to open up the way to heavenly salvation - he manifested himself to our first parents from the very beginning."<sup>6</sup> He invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice.

**55** This revelation was not broken off by our first parents' sin. "After the fall, [God] buoyed them up with the hope of salvation, by promising redemption; and he has never ceased to show

his solicitude for the human race. For he wishes to give eternal life to all those who seek salvation by patience in well-doing."<sup>7</sup>

Even when he disobeyed you and lost your friendship you did not abandon him to the power of death. . . Again and again you offered a covenant to man.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Covenant with Noah**

**56** After the unity of the human race was shattered by sin God at once sought to save humanity part by part. The covenant with Noah after the flood gives expression to the principle of the divine economy toward the "nations", in other words, towards men grouped "in their lands, each with [its] own language, by their families, in their nations".<sup>9</sup>

57 This state of division into many nations is at once cosmic, social and religious. It is intended to limit the pride of fallen humanity<sup>10</sup> united only in its perverse ambition to forge its own unity as at Babel.<sup>11</sup> But, because of sin, both polytheism and the idolatry of the nation and of its rulers constantly threaten this provisional economy with the perversion of paganism.<sup>12</sup>

**58** The covenant with Noah remains in force during the times of the Gentiles, until the universal proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>13</sup> The Bible venerates several great figures among the Gentiles: Abel the just, the king-priest Melchisedek - a figure of Christ - and the upright "Noah, Daniel, and Job".<sup>14</sup> Scripture thus expresses the heights of sanctity that can be reached by those who live according to the covenant of Noah, waiting for Christ to "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad".<sup>15</sup>

### **God chooses Abraham**

**59** In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his father's house,<sup>16</sup> and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations". "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed."<sup>17</sup>

**60** The people descended from Abraham would be the trustee of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church.<sup>18</sup> They would be the root on to which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe.<sup>19</sup>

61 The patriarchs, prophets and certain other Old Testament figures have been and always will be honored as saints in all the Church's liturgical traditions.

### **God forms his people Israel**

**62** After the patriarchs, God formed Israel as his people by freeing them from slavery in Egypt. He established with them the covenant of Mount Sinai and, through Moses, gave them his law so that they would recognize him and serve him as the one living and true God, the provident Father and just judge, and so that they would look for the promised Savior.<sup>20</sup>

**63** Israel is the priestly people of God, "called by the name of the LORD", and "the first to hear the word of God",<sup>21</sup> the people of "elder brethren" in the faith of Abraham.

**64** Through the prophets, God forms his people in the hope of salvation, in the expectation of a new and everlasting Covenant intended for all, to be written on their hearts.<sup>22</sup> The prophets proclaim a radical redemption of the People of God, purification from all their infidelities, a salvation which will include all the nations.<sup>23</sup> Above all, the poor and humble of the Lord will bear this hope. Such holy women as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Judith and Esther kept alive the hope of Israel's salvation. The purest figure among them is Mary.<sup>24</sup>

### III. CHRIST JESUS -- "MEDIATOR AND FULLNESS OF ALL REVELATION"<sup>25</sup>

#### God has said everything in his Word

**65** "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son."<sup>26</sup> Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. St. John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on *Hebrews* 1:1-2:

In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word - and he has no more to say. . . because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.

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#### There will be no further Revelation

**66** "The Christian economy, therefore, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>28</sup> Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

**67** Throughout the ages, there have been so-called "private" revelations, some of which have been recognized by the authority of the Church. They do not belong, however, to the deposit of faith. It is not their role to improve or complete Christ's definitive Revelation, but to help live more fully by it in a certain period of history. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church, the *sensus fidelium* knows how to discern and welcome in these revelations whatever constitutes an authentic call of Christ or his saints to the Church.

Christian faith cannot accept "revelations" that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such "revelations".

## **Sharing and Discussion**

1. Are you more like Mary or Martha? Explain.
2. How would you feel if you visit their home and both of them left you to prepare the meal?
3. In what way do you think Jesus meant that it was “needful” for Martha to follow Mary’s example?
4. What are the characteristics of a person who is becoming spiritually “mature in Christ”?

## **Closing Prayer**

**All:** Gracious God, you called us to listen to Jesus and serve him in one another. Hear our prayers that we might enjoy everlasting life with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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

**All:** Amen

**Saturday 10am - 12pm at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)**

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