

16th Sunday: The 'ONE THING' most important in your life!

Today's readings are seemingly about **hospitality**. Abraham's hospitality towards men of God is well rewarded, through the birth of a child in his old age. Martha's hospitality towards Jesus, by preparing him a beautiful dinner!

I have heard many women complaining about today's parable in the gospel; about Jesus offending Martha's feelings, about the 'unfair assessment from the part of Jesus upon her'. This very simple story, how easily it gets into the heart of the people! We know, work in the kitchen can be at times very demanding, especially in those days!

What is more important? *Contemplation or action*? There are two ways of looking at this story.

-The "active life" versus "contemplative life": Martha is very much involved in the details of preparing lunch, fully immersed in her job. Mary quietly listens to Jesus, at his feet; she represents monks, hermits and contemplatives, in their life of prayer and contemplation. What is the Lord telling us? Both are important; but one should not be sacrificed for the sake of the other. Other words: Listening *has to come before acting*. The problem starts when we act, before/without listening to God. Once we know what to do, then we are ready to act; act in accordance with the will of God. Now, how do I act?

I think this is a very important principle for our life today. We know we are not on a 'contemplative side', we are all, mostly Martha oriented. We know that we are busy, always rushing and active. To the question, "How are you doing? Most of us will respond, busy as usual. Action, to be active, is great but action without contemplation can be problematic. But, if we listen first and then act, it brings order and harmony into life.

-*One versus many*. Martha rep. many things/ Mary: one thing necessary.

The key to spiritual life is, *'having your life, mind-heart focused'*. Focused on the one thing necessary. Then only, all the activities in your life will fall into its place, the right place. Once you are focused on the 'one necessary thing', all the rest will come into your life.

It is not that Martha is busy and Mary, not. The real problem is that Martha is *'anxious' and 'upset'* about many things. In other words, *she is lost in many things of her life*. Mary, on the other hand, is *fully focused in the one and necessary thing*.

Jesus is overturning the social convention of Jewish Society. Kitchen is the place, traditionally occupied by women in Jewish society; it's their space. Men instead, stay in the main room attending to the guest. And if guest is a *Master or Rabbi*, you need to be necessarily at his feet. Martha is mad, that Mary is occupying the post reserved for men only. Jesus overturns this social convention.

Through Jesus' openness to all, to partake in the inner circle of discipleship and the intimacy with the Lord; without distinction on male or female; Jews or gentiles, rich or poor etc.. B & S, we are all called to that discipleship, of careful-attentive listening, enjoying the intimacy of the Lord, which will lead us to the right action and harmony in our life! Being always hospitable as well. Amen