

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things?” The world needs men and women like Martha. Otherwise, very little will get accomplished. Marthas are “doers”. Marthas get things done. Thank goodness for Marthas, and God bless them. They are wonderful people.

If you noticed in the Gospel reading we just heard, Jesus is not putting down Martha (see Lk 10:38-42). At that particular moment Jesus was in their midst. Mary chose the better part, which was to be attentive to Jesus and converse with Him. How many times would they have this opportunity to have Jesus visit them in their home? In a sense Jesus was saying to Martha, “Take advantage of this opportunity. Don’t let it pass you by.”

It reminds me of a time several of us had a gathering for dinner at a family’s home. The appointed time came and we all gathered together in their living room first for conversation before we sat down for dinner. As we gathered, I noticed that the TV was still on and the volume was quite loud. I mentioned to the lady of the house that perhaps it would be nice to turn off the TV so that we could talk without all the distraction and noise. She told us that her husband was a TV addict and that he never turns off the TV, not even when they have company. So there we sat, trying to have a conversation while her husband was fixated on the TV. He rarely joined in the conversation because he was so absorbed by other things. We can see other examples of this today with cell phones. Have you ever been at a restaurant and seen a group of people at a table and some of the people at the table are absorbed with their cell phones, and hardly ever join in the conversation?

Martha was more concerned with custom – providing hospitality to her guests. Martha was more distracted by wanting to provide for their creature comforts than she was spending some time with Jesus. Jesus was pointing out that spiritual needs are more important – refreshing and nourishing the soul should come first – then bodily nourishment can come later. Right now, the important thing was to be refreshed spiritually by sitting at the feet of Jesus, who is the source of spiritual nourishment.

We can get caught up in so many activities that sometimes we can neglect to take care of our souls. Some people are workaholics. They always have to be busy doing something. Sometimes some workaholics can get so caught up in work that they might even forget to eat in order to nourish their bodies, let alone their souls. Our bodies and minds need a rest. They need a break from all the distractions and work. This is why God commanded that on the seventh day that we should rest.

Our souls need rest too. Our souls need nourishment, which is why we are encouraged to come to Mass and be fed by God’s word and the Eucharist. Like Mary, we need to sit at the feet of Jesus and allow Him to speak His word to us. We need to choose the better part, and rest in Him. “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.” (Mt 11:28-29)

This resting in Jesus and being nourished by Him does not mean that we should do this once a week at Mass. We need to rest a little bit with Jesus every day. We can rest with Jesus every day by spending some time in prayer – even if it’s just for five or ten minutes. Any amount of time is better than no time at all. Speaking of cell phones, there are many good apps available for prayer. With one of these apps someone can be just about anywhere and pull up the app and pray. Someone could also come to church and spend some time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. We have Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of every week.

If you take some time to spend with Jesus, He will tell each one of us, “You have chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from you.” It will be the wisest and most productive time we will spend all day. “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for yourselves.”