

XVI SUNDAY : GEN. 18: 1-10; COL. 1: 24-28; LUKE 10: 38-42(July 18, 2010)

We know from the Gospel that Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary were good friends of Jesus. Their little village of Bethany was located two miles from Jerusalem, and according to the Gospel of John, Jesus visited Jerusalem at least six times.

That famous teaching of Jesus on the "one thing necessary" was given at Bethany, the house of Martha and Mary, in the Gospel we hear today. This is a famous story, told by St. Luke. The two sisters, Martha and Mary, are two different characters, with two very different temperaments. One is active, the other passive. One is busy doing; the other, seemingly not busy, listening.

Yes, visitors like to be attended to, not left to sit by themselves in isolated splendor. Guests have come to visit us, not just to taste our food. Mary is doing a very important thing by sitting with her guest. It is not question of one being right and the other being wrong. It is a question of balance and harmony. That is why Jesus is so gentle with Martha in his response. He has great affection for her, and for her strengths, her practicality. But Mary's sensitivity is equally to be appreciated.

"Martha, Martha," Jesus says, "you worry and fret about so many things." This sentiment is true of so much of human life. We live in a busy, overactive, noisy, never-sleeping world. Always on the go, always doing things. If our lives are made up of this constant activity, this ceaseless labor, then we have lost our soul, we have lost our spiritual life. Mary in today's Gospel is a visible reminder to us of what our life requires; stillness, calm and an attentive heart. If we are too busy trying to get on, we will never know what peace is, nor will be able to welcome other people and receive them into our lives.

Let me conclude with the reference to the first reading of today from Genesis: When Abraham welcomed the three visitors to his tent, he prepared a meal for them and took time to sit with them. In response, he received good news of a son to be born. **Give time to the Lord, and the Lord will bless you.**

Anecdote: Some single men in a Bible study group were discussing who would make the better wife--Martha or Mary. One fellow said, "Well, I think Martha would make the better wife. The way to a man's heart is through his stomach. It sounds like Martha surely knew how to cook. I would love to be married to a woman like that!" Another man said, "I think Mary would make the better wife. She was always so thoughtful, sweet and loving. I could be very happy married to a woman like Mary!" Finally, another fellow settled the argument when he said, "Well, I would like to be married to both of them. I would like Martha before supper and Mary after supper." Today's gospel challenges us to combine the listening spirit of Mary with the dynamic spirit of Martha in our Christian lives.

JOKE OF THE WEEK:

A distraught woman tried many times to contact her pastor only to discover that it was his day off. She made contact with him the next day and scolded him severely. "Father, I needed you yesterday," she said, "and you were not there for me. You have let me down. I cannot believe you would take a day off when so many people like me need you." Then she added, "The devil never takes a day off." The minister, a little irritated and with tongue in cheek, responded, "And if I didn't take a day off I would be just like him, wouldn't I?"