

Homily For Tuesday of the 27th Week of Ordinary Time- Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Oct. 6, 2020

Gal.1:13-24 "The one who was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy."

Psalm 139:1-3,13-16 "When I was being made in secret, your eyes beheld my unformed substance."

Luke 10:38-42 "Martha welcomed him into her home. Mary sat at his feet and listened to him."

Listen To Him

Introduction

Jesus visits two sisters, Martha and Mary. He really cares about them and the feeling is obviously mutual for both of them. What the passage leaves out is that Jesus almost certainly has his group of closest disciples with him. Providing a meal for that size of a group is no small task.

Right now, it is hard to imagine getting together like that, isn't it? As covid cases spike, we are being cautioned to have Thanksgiving dinner with only our family who live in the same house. In fact, there are places in the country where it is now against the law to do more. But, just for this Gospel moment, we may consider a close friend, and his disciples, coming to dinner.

Over the summer, some of us have quite cautiously begun to invite people over to our homes again. At first it was just outside on warm days. As it gets cooler and darker, maybe inviting them into the house for dinner and fellowship.

Sometimes when we have friends or family coming over, I think we get so wrapped up in making sure the house and the food are ready, that we lose sight and sense of the joy we are looking forward to in having guests for dinner.

So many things we have to do: cleaning and sanitizing the house, fresh towels, place settings, lots of fancy food, wine, and a new bottle of hand sanitizer in every room.

Luke

We have two dramatically different ways the sisters relate to Jesus. You know them. We have Mary. Luke describes her as having the exact posture of a disciple in Jewish culture. She sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to him. She wants to learn as much as she can from him.

Martha, on the other hand, takes on the role of preparing the meal. You can certainly empathize with her. There is a lot to do and she isn't getting any help. So, what is Martha's problem? Clearly, it is **not** that she is preparing a meal for their guests. It is that she has given herself the task of preparing something to impress her guests, out of pride.

How do we know this? We can know this because of how many times she refers to herself. Lord, do you not care that **my** sister has left **me** to do all the work by **myself**. Tell her to help **me**. Luke makes it clear that she attempts to draw attention to herself and the service she is providing.

But where is her sister's attention? With Jesus. Jesus does not criticize or rebuke Martha for serving, but for trying to draw Mary away from her position as a disciple. That's where pride leads, not only to the loss of her own focus on Jesus but even trying to prevent another from discipleship.

When Jesus rebukes someone he loves, he repeats their name. Martha, Martha ... is an invitation to let go of extra tasks meant to impress others and just be with Jesus, because none of those other things are as necessary as the one thing, to listen to Jesus.

Jesus' mission is to invite people to the heavenly existence. In heaven, the active life ends, while the contemplative life reaches its perfection. That's the one thing necessary. To desire the heavenly existence. That's Jesus. Everything else is a distraction.

Galatians

The passage from Paul's letter to the Galatians is a little more complicated but, if we look at it properly, it will point us in the same direction as Jesus does Martha.

Do you remember when Paul experienced his dramatic conversion? Jesus made himself known to Paul with the repetition of his name: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Even though Paul was bent on destruction of the Jesus Messiah cult, Jesus shows his love for Paul by calling him by name, just as he called Martha, to a dramatic conversion. Stop focusing on so many details of the law. It's killing you as you try to kill the spirit of that same law.

And what does that spirit say? Listen to me. Listen to the one who is sent to show you the meaning of all those details. The details of the law won't save you. Circumcision won't save you. Jesus himself will save you. Listen to him. He is the one who came in the fullness of time so you could turn your gaze from the details of the law to the one is the destination that everything in the law was pointing to.

After his conversion, Paul says he went first to Arabia, very likely to Mt Sinai, to the foot of the mountain where God revealed himself intimately to Moses and Elijah, as they learned directly from God.

Call To Action

What are we distracted by that we make excuses for because they are, in themselves, good, but leading us away from true worship at Jesus' feet? If the work you have set yourself keeps you from being with Jesus, you are missing the most important thing.

The law was good. The fulfillment of the law, Jesus himself, was better. It was the better part. Today, God wants us to know him like he knows us. The psalmist today describes this. It was you who formed my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. It is not our amazing deeds that earn our salvation. It is Jesus Christ, who calls us by our name, inviting us: "Listen to him."

Key Scripture Passages

Galatians: *My earlier life in Judaism, I violently persecuted the church of God, trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism, zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God revealed his Son to me, so I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I went into Arabia, returned to Damascus. After three years, I went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas. Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. They heard it said: The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God because of me.*

Psalms: *Lord, you have searched me and known me ... You discern my thoughts from far away...For it was you who formed my inward parts, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made ... When I was being made in secret, your eyes beheld my unformed substance.*

Luke: *Jesus entered a certain village... Martha welcomed him into her home. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. Martha was distracted by her many tasks. Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me. But the Lord answered her: Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. Mary has chosen the better part which will not be taken from her.*