

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

St Peter's 8:30am Mass- Oct. 9, 2018

Gal.1:13-24 "God set me apart before I was born ... (to) proclaim him among the Gentiles."

Psalms 139 "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Luke 10:38-42 "Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her."

Intro

Jesus is always the key person in the Gospels, and it is right and just, always and everywhere, to listen to him and give thanks for the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And, if we are going to learn how to move, in the spiritual journey of conversion, from where we are to where we are being called by that same Lord, we also need to pay special attention to those people in the gospels who are most like us, who have a lot to learn, who are being instructed by Jesus himself. In this regard, Martha and Paul are especially interesting to us. We usually compare Martha and Mary because they are both right there in the house with Jesus, and there are obvious comparisons in their approach to the presence of Jesus, but the Church has also given us readings today which allow us to place Martha and Paul side by side.

Theme

Paul himself explains that he was zealous for the prescriptions of the law and even persecuted Christians out of what he perceived as obedience to that law. Martha was also only doing what the law of hospitality would demand- probably tidying up, preparing the meal etc. She was not doing anything so destructive as Paul in his persecution of Christians, but she was just as fixated on what would she believed to be most required of her and, in the process, had a very bad attitude about Mary not helping her out. Martha and Paul were both distracted by their own zeal for details. The problem was not those details, but the blindness and obsession caused by them.

The key transformative moment for Paul was when he met Jesus face to face. When the Lord appeared to him, he accepted him. Confronted by the truth: about

Jesus and about his own life, he was able to let go of one path and embark on another. In other words, he wanted so much to do what was right that, when the ultimate son of Righteousness appeared to him, he immediately stopped being distracted by what was of lesser importance.

When I was in formation for the diaconate, I had a wonderful pastor, much like I do now, who was very supportive, and would regularly ask me how my formation was going. One particular time, I answered him that it was going well and that I was still discerning whether I was called to be a deacon. That kind and gentle man quite suddenly changed his expression to one of reprimand as he looked hard at me. Now I wonder whether it was a similar look that Jesus gave Martha. He said - no demanded - Stop discerning whether you are called to the diaconate and start discerning whether you love God.

Through his challenge of asking me to go before God directly instead of looking for external signs in the details around me, I was able to see that I had really been engaged in a self centred search for affirmation, rather than letting go and letting God be in control. When I did that, I was able to relax into God's arms and be satisfied with whatever would happen. I gave up control and let God be in charge. And all of my anxiety left me. I could finally say, with Isaiah (26:12) O God, it is you who have accomplished all we have done."

Ultimately, it was Paul's concern to serve God, as it was Martha's. They were both distracted by their own versions of how to do that. They were both doing the wrong thing for the right reasons.

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.

At Jesus' feet, what would we hear if we didn't get so distracted. Martha, Martha ... you are worried and distracted by many things We can hear our own name, can't we? Is it Facebook, sports or entertainment, the Kardashians?

Mary gave her full attention to the guest himself. Mary exemplifies the contemplative life as she sits attentively to listen and learn from Christ. While both activities are essential to Christian living, listening at Jesus' feet is the 'better part' because in heaven the active life terminates, while the contemplative life reaches its perfection.

Encounter with Christ transforms those who are searching for him, even when we are getting it wrong. And, brothers and sisters, most of us, most of the time are getting it wrong at least a little bit. We don't get to find out whether Martha allowed Jesus' words to transform her. She is a bit like the older brother in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son. Will he go into the banquet or not. Will Martha join her sister at Jesus' feet.

Let us encounter Jesus Christ who says "choose the better part." And, if you do, it will not be taken away from you.