

Homily for October 10, 2017

Today's Gospel is a gracious and tender story where we here two voices. The voice of Martha that is agitated and stressed and the voice of Jesus that is inviting and calm.

This story is so simple and yet has such an important question to ask each of us.

Do we see our life primarily as an obligation or an invitation?

When life is seen primarily as an obligation there is a hurried anxiety where we can feel overwhelmed by life's responsibilities and have a divided heart. This is what the word "distracted" means. Twice in the passage we read of Martha's distractedness.

Luke tells us:

"Martha was distracted by her many tasks"

Jesus says to her:

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things".

The origin of this word means "a drawing away of the mind" and "a tearing apart".

This distraction leads Martha to be so busy that in her exasperation she even starts bossing Jesus around.

"Do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself".

When we are distracted we also often assume an over exaggerated sense of our own responsibility and we can conclude Jesus doesn't care. Such is the tone of voice and interior disposition when we see life primarily as an obligation, an unending list of things that needs to get done. I know that when I am distracted, like Martha, I feel anxious, my mind is racing and I cannot readily concentrate.

How do we learn to address and discover the way that is counter to this tearing apart, this distractedness? By hearing Jesus' gentle words as he points to Mary:

There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part that will not be taken away from her.

Jesus commends Mary, for what in Latin, is called the "unum necessarium". Now think of the word "unum" for where we get the word "unity". Unity allows us to know an interior integration and peace that comes from understanding that life is a invitation to live from a centre where we are learning the way of contemplation.

This is what Jesus commends Mary for. Her life is one where she understands that what is most important is to be centred in Jesus. The word contemplation has in it the word "temple". What

is a Temple? It is a place for worship and adoration. A person who is learning to live a contemplative life is learning to grow in cultivating an interior silence, something we are especially invited to do when we come to adoration of the blessed sacrament.

The more we discover the contemplative invitation that Jesus offers to each of us, the more integrated our lives will become, because we are no longer at the centre. Rather Jesus is at the centre. To learn the way of Mary is something I am discovering is not easy. I am more prone to naturally be distracted like Martha. However, the more I hear Jesus' invitation to cultivate the "unum necessarium", the more I can experience an interior peace that even amidst the demands and busyness of life needn't be taken from me.

May we ask for the grace to cultivate a contemplative heart in a distracted world and so discover life is an invitation to be embraced rather than an obligation to be resented.