

Sunday, July 21, 2019

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Genesis 18:1-10

Responsorial: Psalm 15:2-5

2nd Reading: Colossians 1:24-28

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42

Spending Quality Time with *the Lord at His Feet Listening to Him Speak* (Luke 10:49)

Martha, Martha . . . (Luke 10:41)

Have you ever been so absorbed in a task that you don't hear someone calling you the first time? Or maybe you are so upset about something that your wife or husband has to be extra gentle in speaking your name—more than once—to help you calm down.

That's the situation Martha found herself in when Jesus came to visit. She wanted everything to be just right for her guest, so she set to work. The food had to be perfect, the house spotless, and the kitchen immaculate. Even if she had to do it all by herself—even if all the work drove her half crazy—she was going to do it.

“Lord, do you not care?” (Luke 10:40). Martha's question wasn't a plea for help as much as an accusation born out of exhaustion and frustration. *Don't you see how hard I'm working? You should be feeling sorry for me. This is so unfair. Tell Mary to get off the floor and give me a hand.*

Martha thought that many things were needed—all the tiny details that go into making a perfect meal for an honored guest. But the only thing that was needed, the only thing Jesus wanted, was to be with her. He wasn't looking for an elaborate meal or a red-carpet welcome. He came to share his heart with Mary and her and to invite them to do the same with him. The food would take care of itself. If worse came to worst, he could always multiply some bread and fish! And so, to cut through her stressed-out aggravation, he spoke her name gently. Twice.

You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to worry about how every “room” in your heart looks. Jesus is not going to reject you or complain if a few things are out of order. Remember, he entered a world of suffering, spite, hatred, and hurt—and he redeemed it.

Right here, right now, Jesus is calling your name. Gently. Twice. Open the door, welcome him in, and come sit at his feet.

“Lord, you are all I need.”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these words: *The LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, Abraham saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: "Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way."* The men replied, "Very well, do as you have said." The reading ends with these words: *They asked Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?" He replied, "There in the tent." One of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah will then have a son."*
 - What do these words from the first reading mean to you?
 - Why do you think the reading places so much emphasis on the hospitality of Abraham?
 - How would you rate your own hospitality? What steps can you take to improve it?
2. The responsorial psalm opens with these words: *One who walks blamelessly and does justice; who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue. Who harms not his fellow man, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; by whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the LORD. Who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent. One who does these things shall never be disturbed.*
 - What are some of the attributes of the *One who walks blamelessly and does justice* that are listed in this psalm?
 - Why do you think the result of this is that the *One who does these things shall never be disturbed*?
 - How can you better incorporate some of these attributes into your own life?
3. The second reading begins with these words: *Brothers and sisters: Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church, of which I am a minister in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the word of God, the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past. But now it has been manifested to his holy ones, to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory.*
 - Why do you think the Apostle Paul was able to say, *I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake*?
 - What do you think Paul meant when he said, *in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church*?
 - Paul also speaks of *the mystery hidden from ages and from generations past*, which is *Christ in you, the hope for glory*. What is your understanding of this *mystery*? How does this *mystery* apply to you?
4. In the Gospel reading, we hear of the familiar story of Martha and Mary: *Jesus entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary who sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."*
 - In this Gospel reading, who do you relate to more - Martha or Mary? Why?
 - Why do you think Jesus said that *Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her* (Luke 10:42)?
 - What about you? How would you describe the "better part" when it comes to your relationship with Jesus?
 - Are you always choosing this "better part"? If not, what steps can you take to choose it more often?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the Gospel reading and these words from the reading: *Martha, Martha . . .* (Luke 10:41). It ends with these words: "Martha thought that many things were needed—all the tiny details that go into making a perfect meal for an honored guest. But the only thing that was needed, the only thing Jesus wanted, was to be with her. . . He came to share his heart with Mary and her and to invite them to do the same with him. . . he spoke her name gently. Twice. You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to worry about how every "room" in your heart looks. Jesus is not going to reject you or complain if a few things are out of order. Remember, he entered a world of suffering, spite, hatred, and hurt—and he redeemed it."
 - The meditation states that "Martha thought that many things were needed." It goes on to say that "the only thing Jesus wanted, was to be with her" and that "He came to share his heart with Mary and her and to invite them to do the same with him." In what ways do these words also apply to how Jesus wants to relate to us as well?
 - Do you believe these words are also true each time we attend mass? What are some ways you can better focus your heart on Jesus prior to and during mass, so that you can better prepare yourself to receive him in the Eucharist?

Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to recognize your total dependence on the Lord and for a greater hope and trust in him. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Lord, you are all I need."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partner]