

Sixteenth Sunday of the Year – July 21, 2019

Genesis 18: 1-10a Colossians 1: 24-28 Luke 10: 38-42

It often diminishes, I believe, the potential meaning of a given Gospel account, if it is taken out of context. What we heard today serves as a good example. Jesus, as was told, is at the home of two women, Martha and Mary. He and his followers share in their hospitality.



We need to recall that in St. Luke's account, this is part of the journey Jesus is making between Galilee and Jerusalem. This is the basic outline that Luke is using in order to describe for us what is involved in being a follower of Jesus. So, like what we experience in our own travels, Jesus and his followers have come to a rest stop.

In considering the context of this event, it helps to recall that just previously Jesus had responded to a question made to him by telling the story of the Good Samaritan. It is a strong and direct explanation of the action required in loving one's neighbor. This is a very important element in following Jesus and taking up the cross.

That being the case, it almost seems that what is said in this account is a contradiction. On the one hand, Jesus has said "Go and do likewise," indicating a lesson in action. Yet here the actions of Martha, in busying herself with the duties of hospitality, appear to be criticized in contrast to Mary's apparent inaction in simply listening to Jesus.

Should what Jesus says here be understood as a criticism? Or is there more to what he was saying? He tells Martha: "You are anxious and worried about many things." Indeed, there are many duties to hospitality as there are many sources of anxiety in life. The reality of the ministry of Christ, the message of the Gospel, is to communicate that God is with us and thus we should be at peace rather than anxious or worried. In a loving relationship with God, as well as in the activities of daily life, we can live with the knowledge, the confidence, and the trust, that God, the source of life and love, is with us. This does not take away the cares and anxieties of life. This does not lessen the need to address the demands of daily living. This does not suggest that a life lived in a relationship with God is some sort of escape from the concerns that are part of a household, a family, a job, school or the community.

But we can appreciate the comments of Jesus as being directed to an understanding of putting things in perspective, keeping things in balance. Mary has chosen the better part. She recognizes the opportunity that is present in listening to and giving attention to the presence of Jesus with them. This is the perspective that is to be kept in mind. The Lord is with us.

Following Jesus embraces the whole of our lives. It is to be shown in the manner in which we love and respect whoever might

be our neighbor as a sign of the genuineness of our love of God. It is to be shown in the welcome that we offer to whomever seeks our hospitality and acceptance. It is also to be shown in the reflective appreciation which was evidenced by Mary, no matter whatever else might occupy a particular moment and no matter how distracted we might happen to be. The love of our God is present and available to us.

Whether in active moments of our lives, or in reflective mementos, the presence of Christ with us can be known and appreciated. It is with this outlook on life, this perspective realized day after day, that we can reflect the reality of our good and gracious God.