

Our Lady of Lourdes
Sixteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time
July 18, 2010

Readings:

Genesis 18:1-10

Colossians 1:24-28

Luke 10:38-42

Fr. Bob

In today's Gospel, we are shown two completely different personalities and the way they reacted to the presence of Jesus. Martha and Mary were sisters, but certainly different in their approach. And it's Martha's approach that Jesus criticized on that day. She was busy with the details of hospitality, getting everything ready for the meal and taking care of her guests in that way. When Abraham greeted his three guests in our first reading, he was pretty much the same way. He washed their feet, gave them drink and saw to it that a meal was provided for the guests in his home. But there was a major difference in his approach. He was present to them in his hospitality. He did not disappear from their sight during the length of their visit. It's true that he probably had more help, but he also realized that being with his guests was an important part of welcoming people into his life.

Martha is not a total villain in the Gospels. In some sense she was an activist who spoke her mind. She is remembered as the one who confronted Jesus when her brother Lazarus died but was still remembered as one of the first who was able to say with certainty that Jesus was indeed the lord. And she professed her faith, despite her mourning the loss of her brother. And then there is Mary, her sister. She is sitting at the feet of Jesus listening to him speak, listening to every word that he had to offer. And for a woman in that day and time, she was sort of an activist herself. Her role, in cultural terms, should have been with her sister preparing the meal. Women were not allowed to read scriptures, and had to rely on the interpretation handed to them by men. But she was listening to her savior and hearing it all first hand. In that room, she may have actually been the only woman. But she sat as close to Christ as she could. And it was her faith, on that day, that Jesus complimented.

Martha chose as her first priority to work in the kitchen. Mary chose to be in the presence of her lord. And in truth, both ways of acting are important when it comes to our faith. And hopefully, in some ways we can identify with both women. Jesus was certainly an activist. He was constantly on the move going from one place to another, and going from one home to another. He was restless in the sense

of spreading the word. And as we heard earlier this summer, he sent the disciples and the seventy two out to surrounding towns and villages to proclaim the Gospel. But at the same time, he always took time to find a far off place, or a mountaintop where he could be in communion with his God. He always took the time, to make time, for simply being in the presence of the holy: to pray, to reflect, to be strengthened for what he had to do to complete the mission he had been given.

And there, we find the point of the story in today's Gospel. Most of us, especially the retired, seem to be very busy people in our lives, running from one event to the other. There are many things that take up our time and many things to do. It's especially true in those who are involved with church. We have more ministries and more activities than we do prayer groups. We have many to set up for the activities of the church, but in comparison, much fewer who take time for a retreat or take time just to be alone with the scriptures.

And sometimes, in our busyness, we forget what the source of all our activity comes from. We forget to take time, to just sit at the feet of Christ and let him instruct us about the things that are important and the things that should be our motivation in all matters. The point of the message today is simple, like so many other things that we miss. Taking the time to listen to God in our lives is so important to renew, to strengthen and to guide us. Without it, we are just like so many others: Very busy...but without direction or meaning.