

Ordinary Time 16C 2016

The Better Part

This is one of those gospels that seems so unfair. Martha is busily preparing to serve Jesus, and Mary is sitting at his feet as if there was nothing to do but listen to Jesus. When Martha complains, Jesus replies that she is anxious and worried about many things, but Mary has chosen the better part. It's unfair. Shouldn't Mary be helping Martha? Shouldn't Jesus be more sensitive to Martha?

But Mary *has chosen* the better part. She understands the importance of this moment. She understands that Jesus is the Word of Life who speaks the words of life. And so she sits at his feet listening to every word that comes from his mouth. She knows that this opportunity may never come again. There will never be a guest who speaks like this guest. And so she chooses the better part. She does nothing. She sits and listens to the Word of Life.

God comes into our lives at the most unexpected times and in the most unexpected ways. God came to Abraham in the presence of three strangers. Although Abraham did not know who they were, he welcomed them into his home, and when they departed God promised that Sarah would bear a child. God was present in the stranger.

God comes into our lives in unexpected ways, but if we are to receive the gift of God, we must be attuned to God's presence. But we live in a busy world in

which we are unaware of God's presence. We can be in virtual contact with anybody at any time, but the presence of God comes into our lives in another way. God enters our life in the unexpected visit of a friend. God enters our life in an unexpected word of grace and mercy. God enters our life in a quiet moment when we are doing nothing but listening and waiting for God's Word.

The world needs both Martha and Mary. Without Martha, nothing would be done. Without Mary, we would miss what is most important in life. Most of us are rather good at playing the role of Martha. It's easy to be busy. We are expected to be busy. And when we are not, we think something is wrong. But there are moments when we must enter into the mystery of which St. Paul speaks in today's second reading. We must enter into the mystery hidden from ages and generations past, the mystery of Christ in us. But to enter that mystery we must welcome Christ into our lives. We must sit at his feet, doing nothing useful but listening to the words of Christ, the words of life.

Summertime is a good time to do nothing: to sit and to listen. Take time this summer to get disconnected. Put down the phone and the iPad. Take a walk without the headset. Devote time to pray, to reflect, to mediate, and speak with Christ. Read the scriptures and listen to the Lord. For there is only one thing that is necessary; and when we find it everything falls into place.