

## *Ordinary 16C 2013*

### *What is Important?*

If you have ever worked in the kitchen preparing a meal for others while everybody else is sitting in the living room talking, you understand Martha's complaint. Everybody is enjoying each other's company and there you are alone, in the kitchen, cooking, worrying over the meal. To be sure they will compliment you at the end of the meal. To be sure they will tell you what a marvelous cook you are. But there you are, alone in the kitchen, and there they are enjoying themselves, and you still have the dishes to wash.

If this has ever happened to you, you probably find Jesus' answer to Martha disturbing. Instead of encouraging Mary to help her, Jesus reprimands Martha for being anxious and worried about many things; and he praises Mary for choosing the better part—whatever that means.

It is not difficult to sympathize with Martha. After all, she was doing what she was supposed to be doing—she was busy at work in the kitchen. But Mary was not doing what she was supposed to be doing. She was sitting at the feet Jesus, as if she was one of his disciples. She was listening to and reflecting on his words, as if she were Jesus' student. Mary was not doing her share of the work; she was not doing her part.

What are we to think about Jesus' answer that Martha is anxious and worried about many things, but Mary has chosen the better part? What is Martha anxious and worried about? What has Mary chosen?

Most of us identify with Martha because our lives are filled with cares and anxieties. Every day seems to bring new problems. There are the worries that come from work and school. There are the worries of sickness and illness. There are the worries of money and finance. There are the worries of parents who are growing old and children who are becoming unruly. And then

there are those worries we can't even define—that anxiety that comes in the middle of the night and does not allow us to return to sleep.

Few of us, however, identify with Mary, a woman who has found what is important in life, a woman who has understood that one thing is important and everything else is secondary. But having discovered the one thing, Mary now understands how everything else falls into place.

Mary has learned that the most important thing is to listen to Jesus and reflect on his words. The one thing that is important is to hear the Word of God from the Son of God. The one thing that is important is to be Jesus' disciple. This is the center of Mary's life. This is what gives meaning and purpose to her life. To be sure, there will be worries and anxieties, but they will no longer touch the core and center of her life. What is important, what truly matters, what gives meaning and purpose to Mary's life is the Word of God that comes from the mouth of the Son of God.

Do you know what is important in your life? Some years ago, a reporter asked the great German conductor, Herbert von Karajan the secret of his success. Von Karajan responded, "I choose one thing and forsook all others." If you had to choose one thing and forsake all else, what would it be? Do you know what the center and core of your life is? Or are you like Martha, filled with care and anxiety? If you are like Mary, then you are blessed indeed. You have understood what is important, the one thing that gives meaning and coherence to your life. But if you are like Martha, afflicted with care and anxiety, perhaps it is time to stop and ask what is important. Perhaps it is time to re-center your life in Christ and the living Word of God. Perhaps it is time to learn that there is only one thing that is truly important in life, and when you have discovered it all else falls into place.