



Bringing Home the Word



Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 17, 2016

Opening Our Doors

By Janel Esker

Are you hospitable? Do you welcome guests with ease and enjoyment? Even if you can't craft place settings or party invitations like Martha Stewart, you can still be hospitable, someone with whom others feel comfortable and at home.

Today's readings highlight the theme of hospitality and the rewards that follow. Abraham and Sarah welcome visitors who bring surprising news about Sarah's

pregnancy. Sarah laughs in disbelief, but later discovers the astounding news to be true. Martha and Mary welcome Jesus to their home; overwhelmed by the responsibilities of hosting, Martha misses the treasure right before her—the opportunity to sit at Jesus' feet.

In addition to physical hospitality, Abraham, Sarah, and Martha also learn about hospitality of mind—allowing their minds to be open to new ideas about God's work in their lives. Abraham and Sarah couldn't imagine having a child in their old age. Martha didn't initially comprehend that sitting and conversing with Jesus could supersede the responsibilities of hospitable service. But instead of holding on to their previous ideas about God, they opened their minds and welcomed God's newness—and God came in.

Are we as hospitable in mind as we are in our homes? Are we open to new ideas and experiences of God? Is God able to do new things in our lives, possibly through unexpected people? Or are we rigid in our beliefs and so set in our ways that God can't enter?

We may want to laugh with Sarah or complain with Martha, but our best response is to open our minds and hearts to the mysteries, miracles, and surprising ways of God. †

Sunday Readings

Genesis 18:1–10

"Abraham saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them."

Colossians 1:24–28

"Now it has been manifested to his holy ones, to whom God chose to make known the riches of the glory."

Luke 10:38–42

"Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me? Tell her to help me.'"

A Word From Pope Francis

During Holy Mass, it seemed that we were experiencing all the more urgently the prayer for unity between believers in Christ and at the same time seeing prefigured in some way its full realization, which depends on God's plan and our own faithful cooperation.Let us all feel closely united to the prayer of our Savior at the Last Supper....The more we are faithful to his will, in our thoughts, words and actions, the more we will progress, really and substantially, toward unity.

— Address to representatives of the churches and ecclesial communities, March 20, 2013



- Who or what makes me feel afraid or unsafe?
- To whom or what do I devote most of my attention?



Martha and Mary: Two of Jesus' Friends

By Fr. Norman Langenbrunner

In the time and region of the world where Jesus lived, hospitality—that is, receiving a guest into one's own home and treating him well—was a great virtue. It was a virtue that Martha put into practice when she received Jesus into her home.

Surely, Martha would have gotten to work organizing and preparing everything that was needed to receive Jesus in a suitable way according to the Jewish norms of hospitality, while her sister Mary remained seated at Jesus' feet, listening to him speak. At that time, sitting at the teacher's feet meant sitting to learn from him, and it was common. In the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that St. Paul sat at the feet of the teacher Gamaliel to be instructed in the law (Acts 22:3).

While Mary learned from Jesus, Martha was busy with many chores. Coming up to Jesus, she said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving?" (Luke 10:40). This scene may stir up different emotions in us. Some might think, Mary was right to be angry with her sister, since she wasn't helping her. Others might speculate, Poor Jesus, he was probably tired after his trip and then he had to referee a squabble between sisters.

The important thing is to know what Jesus thought when he answered, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing." (Luke 10:41–42). Because Martha was rushing around and worried about a thousand things she was losing herself in them. By contrast, Mary had "chosen the better part." Note that he did not say Martha was wrong and Mary was right; he just said that "the better part" consisted of being close to him.

What does this story teach us?

Only one thing is necessary to live a full, fruitful, and meaningful life: keeping close to Jesus.

Our work should not prevent us from being in touch with Jesus and others. Jesus likes us to work for him, but he likes it even better when we adore and listen to him.

It reminds us of the greatness of human freedom. Whenever we choose Jesus, we choose to extend his reign among humanity.

We can or should do many good things, but not lose our focus on Jesus and his reign. Jesus is less interested in our achievements than in the love we put into our actions.

Jesus became man to be with us, to be available to us, to offer us his friendship.

Questions

- Am I more like Martha or Mary?
- What prevents me from spending time with, and staying close to, Jesus?
- Do I really want God's will to be done in my life?

Practical Resolutions

Prepare yourself to receive the Eucharist. Arrive early to Mass, sit in a place that helps you pay attention, follow the readings, and participate actively in the responses and songs.

Read the Gospels at length and with faith, seeking to know Jesus better and better.

Ask someone to recommend books or prayers that will help you know and love Jesus more.

Understand that some people are different by nature and accept that God made us that way. Contribute your unique gifts and cooperate with others to participate in God's salvific plan.

Excerpted from *Women of the New Testament*, © 2012, Liguori Publications †



Lord, you teach us to love and welcome strangers. Remove the fear that keeps me from accepting and loving people with backgrounds or perspectives different from mine.

—From *Faithful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

July 18–23

Mon. Weekday: Micah 6:1–4, 6–8/
Matthew 12:38–42

Tue. Weekday: Micah 7:14–15, 18–20/
Matthew 12:46–50

Wed. Weekday: Jeremiah 1:1, 4–10/
Matthew 13:1–9

Thu. Weekday: Jeremiah 2:1–3, 7–8, 12–13/
Matthew 13:10–17

Fri. St. Mary Magdalene: Jeremiah 3:14–17/
John 20:1–2, 11–18

Sat. Weekday: Jeremiah 7:1–11/
Matthew 13:24–30